



C^t. Delphiniau.

*From a Photograph of
the Year 1869*

THE VITALISM OF COUNT DE GOBINEAU

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of
Philosophy, Columbia University*

PUBLICATIONS OF THE
INSTITUTE OF FRENCH STUDIES, INC.
NEW YORK

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Printed in the U. S. A.

TO MY PARENTS

The present volume owes its existence largely to the kindness of the Gobineau family whose gracious hospitality and interest I here gratefully acknowledge. Madame Christine de Gobineau Serpeille, younger daughter of Count de Gobineau, and her sons, Mr Clément Serpeille de Gobineau and Mr François Serpeille de Gobineau, who have carried on the tradition of the great ancestor, have always shown an interest in this study which attempts to unravel some of the origins of his thought. Among the cherished memories which the kindness of the descendants of Count de Gobineau has left, I should like especially to recall that of the late Baronne de Guldencrone, his elder daughter.

No one studying Gobineau can omit confessing his debt to the fundamental works of Prof Ludwig Schemann of Freiburg im Breisgau and to the perspicacious study of Mr. Robert Dreyfus of Paris. To both these savants, as well as to Mr Maurice Lamartinié, who put their wide information at my service, I address my thanks. I gratefully remember Professor Bernard Fay for arousing by curiosity about Gobineau's personality and work. Professor A. Guy H. Spiers of Columbia

University encouraged me in the earlier stages by giving me valuable suggestions. I desire to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to Professor Gustave L. van Roosbroeck under whose direction this study was prepared. He gave me most generously of his time and it was largely owing to his kindly encouragement and able assistance that this study was completed.

Finally, I want to thank Dr. Irving H. Brown, Dr. Arthur Livingstone and Dr. Cargill Sprietsma, also of Columbia University, for their critical reading of the manuscript, as well as Dr. Helen E. Davis for her effectual help in the proof-reading.

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Comparatively few, especially in this country, appreciate the importance of Gobineau the thinker. It is only in recent years that he has won renown as a man of letters and it seems as though a majority still knew of him but vaguely as the promulgator of the controvertible doctrine of Aryan superiority and as the inspirer of Pan-Germanic propagandists. In point of fact, this French diplomat, one of the most fascinating among the prominent figures of the nineteenth century, had a far-reaching influence on the thought of succeeding generations. Aside from the artistic interest of his work which even enemies of his thought now tend to concede him, Joseph Arthur, Count de Gobineau cannot but command attention as an historical figure, standing with his intelligent if aggressive conservatism almost alone in his epoch ¹

In seeking to place this author in the history of ideas it seems at first sight remarkable that he should have been not only a precursor of the French traditionalists, but an inspirer of Nietzsche.

Gobineau was an aristocrat who all his life fought the democratic levelling-trend. Pessimistic and little inclined to believe in progress he reacted against eighteenth Century rationalism and its abstract notion of man.

Edouard Maynial² gives the following definition of *gobinism* which is adequate as far as it goes, but covers only one phase of our author's philosophy. "Si l'on peut parler de gobinisme, c'est une sorte de conception gobi-

¹ Gobineau's dates are from 1816-1882

² Précis de la Littérature Française

nienne de l'histoire et de la sociologie qui soumet les races inférieures et dans chaque race les classes esclaves à l'autorité absolue des types les plus parfaits de l'humanité" This sounds Nietzschean! It is certain that Frederic Nietzsche's third and indeed only very remarkable period owes much to his contact with Gobineau's mind.

The Critics

The author's thought has been studied many times, but never from the point of view of vitalism. First and foremost among the studies of Gobineau stands the very sympathetic two volume *Biographie* in German by Professor Ludwig Schemann of Freiburg im Breisgau.³ This excellent book the value of which is only slightly diminished by the occasional obtrusion of the German patriot is quite indispensable for the student of Gobineau. It shows an unusual understanding of the Count's personality and of his message, especially of the racial idea. Besides a scientific appraisal of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* and of the other theoretical works this biography contains literary criticism of a high order of the poems, novels and short stories. In this work Gobineau's traditionalism and his quality of pioneer in the regionalistic movement receive their proper emphasis.

In 1924 there appeared a French biography by M Lange of the University of Strasbourg.⁴ This work seeks

³ *Gobineau, Eine Biographie* von Ludwig Schemann, Strasbourg, 1913, (Truebner). See also *Gobineau's Rassenwerk* by the same author, Stuttgart, 1910.

⁴ Maurice Lange, *Le Comte Arthur de Gobineau, Etude Biographique et Critique* Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 1924.

through a keen psychological study of Gobineau's personality to understand his hatred of democracy, his exaltation of the blond Germanic type and his nostalgia for the Middle Ages. There are many admirable passages in this book. M. Lange, however, writes from the point of view of an ardent French patriot and one cannot escape the impression that his inability to forgive the Count's lukewarm patriotism has interfered with his objectivity. Without using the word "vitalism" M. Lange makes much of a number of vitalistic aspects of the author's thought. Mentioning Gobineau's debt to Stendhal and Novalis and demonstrating his subjectivity as a historian, the biographer connects him with German romanticism and shows him to have been a precursor of Nietzsche, but he fails to properly distinguish Gobineau's individualism from that of Jean Jacques Rousseau with whom he compares him. To speak of the "anarchic individualism" of Gobineau in the way he does, is an exaggeration and it becomes evident that the author does not appreciate the conflict in the Count's mind. In our opinion, M. Lange makes too much of Gobineau the "féodal" and is thereby led to underestimate the progressive aspects of his thought and his importance to moderns. There is obviously much truth in his portrayal of the Count as an embittered aristocrat full of rancour against democratic France and the modern spirit in general. Among the best features of M. Lange's book are his criticism of Count de Gobineau's poetical works and the passages dealing with his attitude toward Greece and Persia and toward the history of the peoples of those countries.

The merit of Baron Ernest Seillière's *Le Comte de*

Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique (Paris, 1903) consists in its author's having placed the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* in the history of Aryanism. It evinces considerable insight into the Count's personality and the author apparently appreciates fully the importance of the racial thesis in the history of ideas. A propos of Gobineau's anti-intellectualism and fondness for simplicity and his marked nostalgia for the past, M. Seillière establishes a parallel between him and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Curiously enough the book is written, on the whole, sympathetically, notwithstanding the amount of space devoted to sarcasms. One must agree with the opinion of Professor Schemann that the book would gain in value by the omission in future editions of the portions devoted to literary criticism.

Baron Seillière also stresses the importance of Count de Gobineau as a herald of Nietzsche. However, he attacks his philosophy as a phenomenon of romanticism or mystic imperialism, which is interesting on the part of one who is himself an anti-intellectualist and traditionalist.⁵

The word "imperialism" is used by Seillière in an unusual sense. Instead of signifying the desire of conquest or domination possessed by powerful nations, it is applied to the instinctive tendency of every individual or group toward self-expansion or domination. It is scarcely more than what underlies the "amour-propre" of LaRochefoucauld and may be taken as practically a synonym for Nietzsche's "Will to Power". Imperialism

⁵ See also Baron Ernest Seillière *Romanticism*, Preface and Translation by Cargill Sprietsma, reviewed by G. L. van Roosbroeck in the *Romantic Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, April-June, 1930. Ernest Seillière, *Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique*

becomes mystical when the unavoidable thirst for power or "libido dominandi" becomes allied with a justifying principle or supernatural being. Examples for this are the rights of a "superior race" or of a "chosen people", the divine right of Kings, the "Gott mit uns", or the idealization of the lower classes whose "unspoiled instinctive goodness" is supposed to render them fit to govern.⁶

Seillière attacked certain romantic phenomena in the name of reason but it is important to understand what he meant by reason. He had no intention of emulating Voltaire by giving free rein to the critical intellect. Strangely enough he identifies reason with tradition and faith, defining reason as "the condensed social experience of which the morals, the philosophy of Christianity — or rather Catholicism — are the most complete expression". Thus it is seen that his doctrine is fully as anti-intellectualist as any form of romanticism.⁷

The work of Robert Dreyfus entitled *La Vie et les Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau*⁸ is, despite its unassuming manner, perhaps the best book on Gobineau unless one except the German biography of Schemann. There is no doubt that M. Dreyfus understands Gobineau

⁶ See *Journal des Débats*, 19 avril 1918. Jean Bourdeau, *La Psychologie du pangermanisme et de l'impérialisme mystique*.

⁷ Seillière's reproach to romanticism that it has removed the restraint of reason and unloosened all lusts would seem to imply that the "libido dominandi" was better held in check during classical epochs when faith and tradition were triumphant. This theory would be difficult to prove by the example of Louis XIV and his times, as has been pointed out by G. L. van Roosbroeck, the reviewer of Seillière's *Romanticism in the Romantic Review* (See footnote above).

⁸ Published by Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1905. These "Causeries" also appeared in the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*.

His book contains, besides a biography, among other things a brilliant analysis of the racial theory and of the *Histoire des Perses*, an explanation of the puzzling intellectual relationship between Gobineau and the modern French nationalists, a worthy treatment of the Count's oriental phase and a masterly interpretation of *Ottar Jarl* (*Histoire d'Ottar Jarl, pirate norvégien et de sa descendance*, history of an Aryan family) M. Dreyfus appreciates fully the significance of Gobineau's "morale aristocratique" and of his decided Nietzschean trend

The Literary Works of Count de Gobineau by Arnold H Rowbotham, though in English, was published in Paris in 1929. The work is written from the literary point of view and contains some able literary criticism It is correctly stated that Gobineau's works belong to the literature of ideas rather than of form Mr Rowbotham, however, misses to some extent the philosophical import of Gobineau's works of fiction and this probably because of what we consider a misinterpretation. He sees Gobineau as a rationalist and opposes him as such to Carlyle, the champion of intuition. He bases this on Gobineau's poem, *Le Paradis de Béowulf*,⁹ parts of which are definitely vitalistic in spirit, as we expect to show. Gobineau may have sung "the glory of the intellect", but the significant thing is that for him the rationalistic faculties of man were seen to be in the service of life The calm, dispassionate use of reason is

⁹ See Chapter I, page 44 of the present work and the important passage in M Lange's *Etude Biographique et Critique*, pp 171-175 Monsieur Lange here demonstrates with the aid of quotations from the poem the conflict in Gobineau between a tendency we should call Nietzschean and aspirations toward an ascetic ideal He correctly concludes that Count de Gobineau had, at most, only "la vellété de l'ascétisme". See in the appendix the allegorical poem *Error and Truth* which occurs in *Le Paradis de Béowulf*

in our author the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, there is more than one passage in his writings in which he manifests his belief in intuition

Mr Rowbotham is to be congratulated upon his recognition of the modernity of spirit of Gobineau's works on the Orient which, as he states, anticipate the Twentieth Century

A still more recent work on Gobineau is *La Chimie des Races* by Maurice Lamartinié (Editions de la Revue du Centre, Paris, 1930) which treats of Gobineau the sociologist. The author stresses the subjectiveness of Gobineau's writings and even goes so far as to say that his works give one the impression of amounting to one long autobiography. It is certain that there was never a more subjective writer than Count de Gobineau. M. Lamartinié in the following fine passage calls attention to the striking antitheses in our author's character:

"... individualisme hautain et respect de certaines traditions, culte du moi poussé jusqu'à l'anarchie et culte des ancêtres allant jusqu'à l'idolâtrie, orgueil de race et mépris de la foule, appel à l'énergie et pessimisme fatalement inerte. Antithèses qui procèdent toutes d'une racine unique, d'une préoccupation unique, inoculée dès sa naissance la race, et la supériorité de sa race sur toutes les autres"

There is much truth in such a view of Gobineau and it is undeniably in his personality, background and life-experiences that one must seek the reasons for his having written as he did. This, however, would be inadequate as an explanation of his life-work and one cannot dispose of him as an egotist¹⁰

¹⁰ This is not intended as a reflection on the value of M. Lamartinié's book which treats of the sociological import of Gobineau's work

The fact that Gobineau has by many a writer been connected with German romanticism is, from the standpoint of our thesis, significant. Romanticism, however, is a vague term covering altogether too many things. Gobineau's writings must be clearly differentiated from some of the most representative forms of romanticism. He had, for instance, little of an Alfred de Musset or a Byron. In particular, the juxtaposition of the names of Gobineau and Rousseau requires caution. Count de Gobineau was a traditionalist and thus approached in some of the aspects of his thought the position of Henri Bordeaux and Paul Bourget and even that of Ernest Seillière who condemned the racial philosophy as romantic. Our author, moreover, often showed a pragmatic attitude and pragmatism, with its utilitarian connotation, is not usually considered romantic. If, therefore, one designates Gobineau's philosophy as romantic, as a sort of "vitalistic romanticism", this should be done with the proper reservations.

We shall attempt to show that with all his conflicts Gobineau achieved a certain consistency in his personality and mental attitude. Apparently it has not heretofore been sufficiently realized that every major tendency in Gobineau is vitalistic. We need not except even the racial thesis, although our author's determinism, which was based on it, undoubtedly limited his vitalism. In itself the racial idea which attributes a special instinct to each race is a development of the notion of human instinct held by the early vitalists. The object of this book will be to prove that the outstanding characteristic in Gobineau's work is vitalism.

The Meaning of Vitalism

What is vitalism? It is certain that this term which has more than one meaning is not very generally understood. We must now endeavor to define vitalism in its several senses and determine the extent of the applicability of that term to our author. Vitalism in the biological sense is "the doctrine that life had its origin and support in some principle that is neither material nor organic"¹¹ It is synonymous with animism.¹² According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* this theory, mainly associated with the name of G. E. Stahl (1660-1734), and revived by F. Boullier (1813-1899) "makes life, or life and mind, the directive principle in evolution and growth, holding that all cannot be traced back to chemical and mechanical processes, but that there is a directive force which guides energy without altering its amount" This animism or vitalism, as we gather its meaning from these definitions which seem to fit Gobineau, appears to be exceedingly close to voluntarism in the psychological sense if not synonymous with it. This is "the theory that consciousness is not merely a characteristic of nerve-activity, but a purposive guiding agency separate from and controlling it"¹³ This theory certainly tallies with our author's views¹⁴

¹¹ The Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary

¹² This is not to be confused with Primitive Animism or Primitive Anthropomorphism which is "the belief that all natural objects which seem to exert any power or influence are moved or animated by "spirits" or intelligent purposive beings" See McDougall *Body and Mind*

¹³ The Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary

¹⁴ Voluntarism in the philosophical sense is defined (Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary) as follows "The theory which holds that will is the ultimate principle, both in experience and development of the individual, and in the constitution and evolution of the universe". The concept of race was too fundamental with Gobineau for him to be a voluntarist in any but a limited sense. He could admit freedom in volition only within the limits of racial heredity

We know from letters to his sister, Caroline, the nun of Solesmes, that he inclined to panpsychism. Thus on October 20, 1869, he wrote her from Rio de Janeiro: "Je ne trouve pas de difficulté à constater la vie dans toute la nature inorganique, c'est à dire, un certain stage, une certaine forme, un certain développement de la vie, et si cette vie est soumise à des lois, c'est à dire à des forces qui la dirigent et la font être et la font graviter d'une certaine façon et dans un certain but, je ne vois pas encore de difficulté non plus à appeler ces forces des dieux dans le sens du mot Elohim de certains passages de la Bible" That Gobineau rejected pantheism becomes clear from the remainder of this passage which we do not quote and also from a letter of July, 1874 from Stockholm in which he says "Je n'imagine pas Dieu sans conscience de lui-même comme le Dieu panthéiste, car la conscience dans la plus grande plénitude possible est l'attribut le plus divin qui existe et qui puisse se concevoir"¹⁵

The following definition of vitalism in the psychological sense¹⁶ is clearly not in keeping with the author's panpsychism, though otherwise not dissimilar in spirit. "The theory that organic growth is due to a force or agency that operates only in living organisms and differs in kind from the chemical and physical forces at work in the inorganic world; opposed to mechanism".¹⁷

¹⁵ These passages have been quoted by Ludwig Schemann in *Quellen zum Leben Gobineaus*

¹⁶ Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary

¹⁷ Mechanism in the psychological sense (Funk and Wagnalls)

"The theory that the forces that produce organic growth are the same physical and chemical agencies that operate in the inorganic world, differing from them only in degree, opposed to vitalism" Gobineau would have agreed that the same forces producing organic growth were at work in inorganic nature and that these "differed only in degree", but he believed that a "vital force", irreducible to chemical, physical or mechanical terms animated inorganic as well as organic nature.

Vitalism in the philosophical sense is perhaps best represented by the Frenchman Henri Bergson. This movement¹⁸ upholds "the principles of freedom and self-determination and the power of the human consciousness. It places intuition above intellect and considers the universe as living and self-evolving without predestined development or end"

We have considered several definitions of vitalism and it has become very apparent that the term has more than one meaning. Perhaps it would not be too much to say that it is a concept still in process of formation. In addition to its biological meaning where it is synonymous with animism, there is a whole complex of tendencies which could be called vitalistic. A vitalist in the narrower sense is one who believes in "some principle neither material nor organic", who thinks life inexplicable by chemistry and physics alone. Obviously also panpsychism and hylozoism and Gobineau's idea of racial souls¹⁹ are vitalistic conceptions, as well as the belief in the world-soul held in antiquity by Plato and in modern times by Schelling and Fechner.

This belief in an undefinable "vital force" or "vital principle" one generally finds accompanied by others. Vitalism has a broader as well as a narrower meaning and in the broader sense it seems less a philosophy than an attitude of mind. With the biological doctrine one usually finds associated a strong faith in immortality, a trust in intuition and instinct, belief in the freedom of the will and often also sympathy with illusion and a marked individualism. Vitalism in this broader sense

¹⁸ Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary

¹⁹ *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (Paris, 1884), II, pp 543-546 (Conclusion Générale).

might be called a philosophy of affirmation since it is anti-ascetic, opposing all ascetism in religion and philosophy and destructive or negative intellectualism. Vitalists, of course, strongly oppose the Buddhistic concept of Nirvana. They are inclined to value intuition more than intellect and to glorify "life" as the ultimate reality. Pragmatism follows from this as a matter of course, for vitalists naturally wish to heighten life and to further it in every way.

It would, in our opinion, not be necessary for a thinker to manifest all of these tendencies to be considered vitalistic; a majority would suffice. Thus Count de Gobineau, for example, tended among other things to place intuition above intellect, but his vitalism was limited by his racial determinism. He could believe in the power of the human consciousness and will only within the limits of racial heredity.

It will become apparent in our short history of vitalism and elsewhere that the term romanticism covers most of its manifestations. Individualism is vitalistic and it is usually regarded as romantic when it involves considerable exaltation of feeling. At any rate, the energy of the Cornelian hero who is generally ranged with classicism, is no less vitalistic than the romantic individualism shown by A. de Musset, Byron, Chateaubriand and their creations. Gobineau and Rousseau, for all their contrasts, belong equally in the vitalistic current and there is obviously a great difference between the vitalism of Frederic Nietzsche and that of Henri Bergson. Even Henri Poincaré, the French mathematician, with his limited pragmatism, is to that extent vitalistic.

Much importance is attached by vitalists to instinct

or "unconscious spontaneity" which they view as superior to reason or cold intelligence. Instinct, moreover, has its social equivalent in tradition so that vitalists, as a rule, deprecate undue intellectual interference in social evolution, preferring to trust the irrational or non-rational continuity or spontaneity of life itself. Thus eighteenth Century rationalism and the *Contrat Social* of Jean Jacques Rousseau²⁰ and their sequel, the French Revolution, are anathema to vitalists.

Vitalistic theorists are given to comparing societies to biological organisms and among them are some who incline to see almost everything in terms of life. On the part of vitalists there is often a concern for the longevity of institutions and social systems. The question of temperament, however, inevitably enters in; pragmatism is known to have been used for the most varied ends and the vitalistic viewpoint can be found in different variants among radicals no less than among conservatives.

Vitalists are advocates of intense living and emphasize the importance of strength of character, one thinks of the cult of energy of Stendhal, Mérimée, Gobineau and Nietzsche. Vitalism is anti-intellectual and hostile to rationalism. Reason proceeds by means of identity, while life makes for differentiation. Vitalists abhor the abstract notion of man brought into fashion by the "philosophes" of eighteenth Century France and the more logical and consistent among them combat the "égalitaires" and, in particular, the attempt of Rousseau the rationalist to create an artificial equality among men.

Vitalists tend to distrust the dispassionate use of the intellect and to deny the concept of absolute truth, be-

²⁰ Rousseau was vitalistic in religion and in the importance he attributed to the individual human soul.

cause they favor individual truths. They sympathize with illusion whenever it is seen to favor life. We have said that a pragmatic attitude is the natural accompaniment of vitalism; life is furthered when the practical efficacy of an idea becomes the criterion of its truth.

In the importance vitalism attaches to the individual soul it becomes identified with romanticism, but there is more than one kind of individualism, in particular one might distinguish between an impulsive and a restrained individualism. Gobineau's individualism, for instance, is easily distinguished from the egotistic individualism of Stendhal. Between individualism and traditionalism, which are equally vitalistic, there is necessarily a conflict. There are perhaps no two writers in whom this conflict was so marked as in Count de Gobineau and Maurice Barrès.

Gobineau's thought was affected by the writings of Stendhal and Novalis and may be considered a part of that vitalistic current so characteristic of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century which, discernible in the voluntarism of Schopenhauer, the personalism of Nietzsche, the intuitionism of Bergson and the pragmatism of Wm. James and others, seems still to be gaining momentum. In his equal concern with the health and vitality of individuals and societies, our author resembled no one so much as he did the nationalist Maurice Barrès. It will appear in the course of our study that he experienced similar difficulties in his endeavors to harmonize the aspirations of the individual with collective interest. Gobineau and Barrès, who were in so many respects profoundly different, met in their traditionalism and anti-intellectualism.

* * * * *

The History of Vitalism

Some familiarity with the history of vitalism is essential. The romantic theory of a certain group of German thinkers and poets owes, as we shall see, much to a vitalistic school of thought. Vitalism is to a considerable extent identified with romanticism, although vitalists do not necessarily exhibit all the characteristics of romanticism. Gobineau, for example, is a vitalist without being a romantic of the type of Byron. Although he had been influenced by romantic currents, we can see from his essays of literary criticism that he reacted very strongly against romantic tenets and especially against the personal lyricism in vogue in his epoch. He was a humanist and believed in classical restraint in art.

The most important group of romantic theorists and the one, in fact, to become the center for the propagation of romantic ideas throughout the European continent, was that constituted in Germany by the Schlegels, by Tieck, Holderlin, Schelling, and Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg). Rousseau and the youthful Goethe were less influential in comparison. The intuitivistic theory of this group can be traced to a vitalistic school of thought which predominated in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth Centuries. Paradoxically, it goes back in its origins to a scientific hypothesis which dominated biological and especially medical thought for three-quarters of a Century, the animism of G. E. Stahl.²¹

It is the school of Montpellier, best represented by

²¹ Some of these ideas have their forerunners in the animism of Aristotle, the dynamism of the Stoics, in Hippocratic medicine and even in the hylozoism of pre-socratic philosophers. A detailed discussion of the subject is not possible here.

the scientists Barthez,²² Bordeu and Grimaud, which most clearly formulated these vitalistic principles. For them life is an unconscious spontaneity, superior at once to mechanical necessity and finalistic reasoning. They opposed not only Cartesian mechanism and chemical mechanism (that of the iatrochemists), but disagreed with Stahl who had attempted to explain vital phenomena by means of a finality analogous to the kind found in the consciousness of human beings.

The romantic theory of the German poets and philosophers amounts practically to a generalization of the vitalism of biological theorists, they were given to extending the vitalistic formulas to all orders of reality.²³ Depreciating mechanism or cold intelligence these German romantics glorified "vital impulse" which they considered to be the underlying principle of all reality. To intellectual analysis which decomposes the whole into its parts and mechanical construction which builds up by means of assembling parts already given, they opposed that obscure power of creation and synthesis working

²² Paul Joseph Barthez (or Barthes), French physician, born Dec 11, 1734, at Montpellier, died Oct 15, 1806 in Paris. His *Nouveaux élémens de la science de l'homme* was published in 1778.

²³ A very similar conception of instinct as something intellectually and mechanically inexplicable, was held by British psychologists of the eighteenth Century from Shaftesbury to Thomas Reid, and the development given the thesis by J. J. Rousseau is well known. Berthelot has shown the conflict in philosophy between the Cartesian and the romantic spirit. There was a struggle against the Cartesian spirit among the British psychologists as well as amongst German metaphysicians. British empiricism and utilitarianism was condemned by its very principles to waver between the Cartesian and the romantic spirit without identifying itself completely with either. "Car il ne renonce pas à la notion d'explication scientifique; mais il érige en principes premiers d'explication, en mesure de la connaissance scientifique et de la rationalité, les formes proprement irrationnelles de l'âme, la sensation, l'instinct, obscurs instruments et expressions indistinctes de la vie organique". René Berthelot *Un Romantisme Utilitaire*, Tome III, page 406, (Paris, 1922), and Tome I, p. 137, (Paris, 1911).

spontaneously from inside outwards which is manifested by what we call life. These romantics recognized this power of life in societies no less than in biological organisms ²⁴

German romanticism combated the thought of the eighteenth Century as represented by the philosophers of the "Enlightenment". The tendency of vitalism in its romantic expression was toward freedom from intellectual restraint in art. German romantics glorified Shakespeare and were wont to belittle Racine and French classicism in general. The music of Rameau and the painting of Poussin were considered too intellectual

Gobineau's Romanticism

Obviously, when speaking of Count de Gobineau as a romantic, one cannot mean the mentality of a René or a Werther nor the "despairing inertia" of an Obermann. To a given set of conditions different temperaments react in different ways. Thus, with a similar social and economic background, we have on one side the Octave of Alfred de Musset's *Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle* and on the other the very different reaction of his contemporary Henri Beyle (Stendhal). Stendhal is classed as a romantic for his egotism and his glorification of individual energy,²⁵ although romantic sensibility in him was tempered by an analytical mind and the influence of such eighteenth century writers as Condillac and Cabanis.

Gobineau, who had undergone the influence of Novalis and others of the German romantics to whom we

²⁴ The reader will see in Chapter II of the present work that Gobineau always saw societies as living organisms

²⁵ The glorification of energy is considered romantic, but the usefulness of that term seems doubtful when one thinks of the heroes of such a representative of French classicism as Pierre Corneille.

have referred, believed in intuition and "vital impulse" His romanticism implied a release of energy and clearly belongs to the vitalistic type associated with the names of Stendhal and Nietzsche One thinks also of the heroes of Balzac's novels in which we have such a vivid picture of the rise of the French bourgeoisie. It is, however, something of an exaggeration to credit Gobineau, as some have done, with the psychology of an "arriviste".

Count de Gobineau was a traditionalist or social vitalist and his interpretation of French History resembled that of Taine in the *Origines de la France Contemporaine* Both had been preceded by Edmund Burke, the Irish orator and statesman Burke, the great adversary of the French Revolution, glorified tradition as the social equivalent of instinct and as the only means of assuring the health of the social organism. This utilitarian²⁶ has given perhaps the clearest expression to the theory of social vitalism which lies at the opposite pole from the Voltairian school of History and from the intellectualism of the French classical spirit which, like catholicism in religion, admitted the possibility in politics and art, of permanent models of universal applicability, regardless of the succession of epochs and the diversity of national traditions. This vitalism favored the spontaneous development of life in its irrational continuity. Burke was an English Protestant and a liberal. The theory lost much of its original coherence when it was taken up by the advocates of the Counter-Revolution in France and Germany. As Berthelot²⁷ has pointed out, the school of Savigny tried to justify the

²⁶ Edmund Burke *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). See R. Berthelot.

²⁷ René Berthelot *Un Romantisme Utilitaire*, Paris, 1911, Tome I, p. 125, and footnote on pp 125-126

Prussian state, which represented largely an attempt to imitate the administrative monarchy of Louis XIV, in the name of traditionalism and national vitalism

Varieties of Pragmatism

It is significant that pragmatism has been used alternately by theorists of revolutionary socialism and by advocates of a reactionary nationalism²⁸ Pragmatism in its different forms is probably the most representative modern manifestation of vitalism Nietzsche with his lyrical symbol of the superman has given the thought its most audacious and poetic expression. He is a far more thorough-going pragmatist than, for instance, Henri Bergson One can obtain an idea of his viewpoint from the notes of certain courses of lectures which he gave at the University of Bâle, on Greek philosophers These notes have been preserved and published under the title of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of Greece* Nietzsche favored the earlier Greek thinkers because they did not separate truth from life In his estimation, the critical moment in Greek life and thought came when knowledge was placed above life, when instead of being considered a mere instrument of the vital instinct, it began to appear as of sovereign value and as an end in itself He regarded this victory of intellectualism, which is apparent in the personality of Socrates and in the works of Plato, as having been fatal to Greek civilization.²⁹

²⁸ See the vitalistic theory of the socialist Karl Marx (1818-1883) and also the pragmatism of Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779-1861), German jurist of French descent. Rene Berthelot *Un Romanisme Utilitaire*, Tome I, (Paris, 1911), pp 105-106 and p 126

²⁹ In his *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche traces the same idea in connection with the Greek drama Greek life found its most intense literary expression in the works of the Athenian dramatists Eschylus and Sophocles But here also the vital instinct was destined to weaken and to be overcome by reflection and analysis In the development of Greek drama Euripides is the counterpart of Socrates. See R. Berthelot.

Pragmatism, especially as we have it in Nietzsche, who calls it perspectivism, is a mixture of romantic and of utilitarian ideas. Nietzsche had in his youth been influenced not only by Holderlin and Emerson, but also by Carlyle and Coleridge, both of whom had introduced German romantic ideas in England in opposition to the mechanistic physics and the utilitarian sociology and psychology in fashion in that country in their day. On the other hand, he had read Herbert Spencer and in that indirect way undergone the influence of Charles Darwin. One must add to this also the contribution of French and English utilitarians of the eighteenth Century. Nietzsche, then, took on one side the formulae of vitalistic or romantic biology and on the other the scientific hypotheses and utilitarian ideas of Lamarckian and Darwinian biology.³⁰

The theory of natural selection was generalized by Nietzsche who applied the idea of utility to the notion of truth. He came to see our beliefs or intellectual tendencies as forms of life in us. Those beliefs which most further the adaptation of the individual to his environment will tend to endure the longest because they are the most useful. An individual inevitably comes to regard as true those beliefs which, with the passing of time and amid the transformations of his sentiments and ideas, have proven the greatest degree of stability.

William James distinguishes three kinds of pragmatism. One may understand by that term, for instance, merely a certain attitude of mind, an inclination to attach more importance to practice than to theory and to

³⁰ This, as R. Berthelot has pointed out, was a somewhat precarious undertaking, considering that romantics seek to attain truth by intuition while utilitarians stress the notion of natural law.

value consequences above principles. The word has also been applied to the Bergsonian theory of the universe, according to which the world as well as truth are viewed as contingent. Instead of constituting a necessary system, the world creates itself in time, whether or not there exist superior liberties or contingent forms of activity inferior to the will of man, human liberty, at any rate, creates something original and that was not inevitable.

The most significant sense of pragmatism, in our opinion, however, is that which gives a new meaning to the word "truth". Particular truths and the idea of truth in general are, in this view, created by action, by practical experience, in short by life. Those beliefs which best satisfy our needs and have been found most favorable or conducive to action, we consider true.

Clearly, there is no necessary connection between those three meanings of pragmatism. Many a man of action has been an uncompromising dogmatist. Aristotle and in modern times Descartes have been cited as examples for men who believed in liberty and contingency without taking a pragmatic view of truth.

Pragmatism, as it concerns us, is a tendency of thought which is inimical to idealistic rationalism, it seeks to do away with the notion of a necessary and objective truth existing by itself and imposing itself upon pure intelligencies. Truth, in this view, is not to be conceived otherwise than in relation to living, individual souls. Thus in pragmatism one loses sight of the meaning most ordinarily attached to the word truth, but the distinction between true and false is not annulled as in scepticism. The value of truth no longer relates to knowledge, but is seen to reside in its capacity to further

action There are truths but not one Truth William James recognized both Haeckel and Hegel as enemies ³¹

The pragmatism of Gobineau resembles the spirit of William James' famous essay on *The Will to Believe* which was published in 1898 and did so much to render that philosophy popular Gobineau, indeed, has much in common with more than one type of vitalism, but we shall emphasize the proximity of his ideas to Nietzschean conceptions ³²

We do not wish to give the impression that Gobineau was exactly and literally a pragmatist, nor even that he was quite consistently vitalistic It should, however, become ever clearer that his philosophy as a whole must definitely be ranged in the vitalistic current.

Gobineau resembled Nietzsche in his insistence that life be lived intensely, in the fact that he placed life above knowledge and that he oppugned the democratic levellers Like Nietzsche he was anti-Christian in spirit even though he called himself a Roman Catholic Like him, again, he was a strong individualist and passionate in his hatred of the herd. Life for him, as for his German successor, was a struggle and an effort forward It meant overcoming for the sake of creating higher forms of

³¹ Idealistic rationalists are driven to admit the value of certain contributions made to modern thought by pragmatists Thus we owe to Poincaré, whose pragmatism is limited, an ingenious theory of space, to James and Nietzsche valuable studies in the sphere of ethics and religion and to Bergson a highly original theory of time René Berthelot *Un Romantisme Utilitaire*.

³² Nietzsche's choice of the ancient sophists as intellectual ancestors is not entirely happy The vitalism of the sophists was of a very prosaic sort Though he correctly saw in them the first theorists of biological and social utilitarianism, it is a far cry from the ideas of these lawyers and merchants to the poetic conceptions of the German thinker See R. Berthelot *Un Romantisme Utilitaire*, Tome I, (Paris, 1911), passage on Greek Sophists, pp 89-90, 94, 96, 97

existence and overcoming oneself no less than others

Vitalism can be democratic Karl Marx is an example of a socialistic vitalist Gobineau's interpretation of vitalism was aristocratic Aristocracy, being merely an attitude, could lend itself to various philosophical systems It is our business to determine the philosophic content of our author's vitalism, its exact nuance

Gobineau the Aristocrat

What were the reasons for Gobineau's aristocratic attitude? As soon as we know this we shall understand what prompted him to write When a person indulges in deep thinking relatively early in life, there are some good reasons for it The intellect is most likely to be incited to activity by personal difficulties and problems in adjustment It may be that to the mind of Barrès, the problem of the self was suggested by the plight of his native Lorraine, which, eternally torn as it is between Germany and France, has always been hindered from developing an independent historic existence³³ In the case of Gobineau it may have been partly racial, as we shall see, but must have been principally due to the fact that he was born into an impecunious family of the proudest aristocratic traditions, at a time when the aristocracy of his country had lost its privileges and was obliged to compete on equal terms with the bourgeoisie. Naturally he wished to justify his aristocracy in a democratic age His was, in fact, the typical attitude of the defeated nobility One thinks of such aristocrats as Guérin, Baudelaire, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Villiers de l'Isle Adam and earlier of Chateaubriand and Alfred de Vigny To Gobineau it seemed that aristocracy was

³³ See Maurice Barrès, *Pages Choisies*, preface by Baldensperger.

based on race We shall have to consider in another place the psychological reasons for his preoccupation with the question of race

Biography

Gobineau's dates are from 1816-1882 and he was born in Ville d'Avray near Paris of a Bordeaux family whose origins he has attempted to trace to Scandinavia ³⁴ It will help place him in the reader's mind to mention some of his friends in France, for example, there were Alexis de Toqueville, Prosper Mérimée, Ernest Renan and Charles de Rémusat, in Germany, King George V of Hanover, Richard Wagner and to some extent Prince Bismark, in Austria, Count Prokesch von Osten. Robert Earl of Lytton, vice-roy of India, was his great admirer and among his most intimate friends was Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil

Gobineau held diplomatic posts in Persia, Greece, Brazil and Denmark, the first two mentioned being the most important It is to Alexis de Toqueville that he owed his opportunity for a career. His failure to achieve note as a diplomat is not surprising in view of the fact that he was in absolute opposition to his age, which made a religion of democracy Although he had gone against the royalist traditions of his family and modified his principles of legitimacy in order to adjust himself to the different régimes under which he served, he was never willing to sacrifice his political convictions completely to personal interest. His most pronounced trait was independence and the determination never to yield. It cannot be doubted that he compromised his professional

³⁴ *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl, pirate norvégien et de sa descendance.*

success by his egotism and needless tactlessness. All this suffices to explain his premature retirement.

On the other hand, Gobineau was one of the most productive writers of his time and he attained distinction in more than one genre. The list of his activities is indeed formidable and includes not, as one might think, literature on one side and diplomacy and politics on the other, but philosophy, history, ethnography and philology and in the realm of art, sculpture as well as poetry. He could not rise to prominence as a sculptor, despite his originality, because he began too late in life to master the technique. Some of his poems, however, are, notwithstanding their formal imperfections, much appreciated by certain German and even by some French literary critics.³⁵ Paul Colin in his article entitled *L'âme de Gobineau*³⁶ does not even mention all of Gobineau's activities. One cannot but smile at the comic despair of this critic, who wonders whether or not he is to approve of this "diable de Gobineau".

The most widely-known work is the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* which appeared in 1854; it is mainly through this that the author became famous and then public attention was directed so exclusively to certain startling ideas contained in this product of his youth, that the other aspects of his thought were neglected and the literary side of his work fell into oblivion. Gobineau became known as the "paladin of one idea", as the racial theorist who had sponsored the idea of the superiority of the Aryan race.

³⁵ Théodore de Banville (in *Le National*, 31 juillet 1876). Max Koch (in *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, Feb 17, 1914). See Ludwig Schemann, *Biography of Gobineau*, Vol II, pp 634-635.

³⁶ *Europe, revue mensuelle*, 1er octobre, 1923.

The Essai and the Public

The thesis of the *Essai* was in contradiction to the spirit of the times, was in fact the very antithesis of the opinions current at that epoch, particularly in France. The Academicians and representative professors of France³⁷ detested its author not only for the racial theory in itself, but because the book contained an attack on the Christian religion to which all civilizing influence was denied. Another thorn in their flesh was his disparagement of the civilizations of Greece and Rome; such an attitude was unforgivable! Aside from these disadvantages one could scarcely expect such a book to receive a rousing welcome at the hands of a people who, unlike the rather concerted pan-Germans, had no Aryan pretensions. It was a long time before the book gained much ground, and when it did commence to do so, it was naturally not the French, representing as they do a Latin culture, who took it up. Gobineau had been harsh toward the Latin peoples.³⁸ So it is chiefly to Germany, first to Richard Wagner and then to the pious diligence of Professor Ludwig Schemann of Freiburg and other German scholars, that this Frenchman owes his present fame. The irony of this is enhanced by the fact, to which

³⁷ Emile Faguet. See L. Schemann, *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, XX ff, pp 40-59

³⁸ Some southerners in our country took to the book immensely at the time of our civil war and it would undoubtedly have been translated and published in its entirety in the United States at that time but for the author's refusal to modify his pessimistic conclusion. Mr. H. Hotz of Montgomery, Alabama, U S A translated the first part of the *Essai* which appeared in 1856 (Philadelphia, Lippincott) under the title "The moral and intellectual diversity of races, with particular reference to their respective influence in the civil and political history of mankind, from the French of Count A. de Gobineau, with an analytical introduction and copious historical notes, by H. Hotz, to which is added an appendix by J. C. Nott."

we shall recur, that Wagner did not understand him. What explains the extraordinary popularity of Gobineau across the Rhine? Nothing in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* supports the German assumption that they are purer Aryans than the French. The author states explicitly that racial mixture and consequent degeneration has gone as far in Eastern as it has in Western Europe. He deems the South the worst in that respect and says that although there are Aryan remnants scattered throughout Europe, it is among Anglo-Saxons only that the Aryan is still conspicuous enough to make the influence of his virtues felt. It is clear that the Germans, with a passionate determination to be considered Aryans, have simply adopted Gobineau's thesis and ignoring the passages which do not flatter them, identified themselves with his ideal race. A careful reading of the *Essai* must at once dispel the absurd notion that Gobineau was a pan-German.³⁹

Gobineau and the Germans

It is true that Count de Gobineau felt at home in German surroundings and that he had an unusual understanding for the German mentality and great sympathy for the German people and their literature. This meant, as it did in the case of Mme de Stael, a love of Germany in its medieval and romantic aspects. Gobineau had spent several of the most impressionable years of his boyhood in Germany, he lived at that time in an old castle situated in the middle of a pond and accessible only by means of a drawbridge. Parts of this castle

³⁹ Volume II, page 387 states that the Germans are not Germanic. Page 491 gives Gobineau's ideas as to the present distribution of Aryans in Europe. Page 536 speaks of French, German and Irish, equally hybrid, emigrating to America and running all hope of the Anglo-Saxon maintaining his racial purity on that continent.

dated from the Middle Ages and everything about the village was reminiscent of medieval times. One readily conceives the effect of this environment on a child with a sensitive imagination.

There is nothing mysterious in Gobineau's love of Germany, when one considers that it was there he at length found a group of sympathetic admirers, after having been gradually alienated from his native land through his ruined diplomatic career, his failure to secure literary recognition and finally his domestic tragedy, the estrangement from his wife, Countess de Gobineau. When the Franco-Prussian war broke out, it was almost as if the two halves of his personality had suddenly been arrayed against each other. This experience had the result of strengthening in him a tendency to asceticism.

The Pan-Germans, however, were not the only ones to claim Gobineau. French imperialists and many another clique or political party, proceeding in the most arbitrary manner, made him its patron.

Gobineau's racial consciousness and reasons for writing

Very possibly our author's acute racial consciousness was based in part on a sense of inferiority and for this there may have been more than one reason. According to Elie Faure⁴⁰, Gobineau was the "théâtre d'un conflit ethnique terrible", but if this is true, if indeed he experienced in his own person the disadvantages of excessive racial mixture, he would not thereby have differed much, except possibly in degree, from many another modern in whom contending and in part racially condi-

⁴⁰ Elie Faure *Gobineau et le Problème des Races, Europe, revue mensuelle*, Octobre, 1923

tioned impulses of different kinds struggle for mastery. This extreme consciousness of race, this anxious regard for pedigree and the horror of "mésalliance" may perhaps be partly explained by his immediate heredity. The young man had not been slow to observe marked inequalities in character in different members of his family and had never allowed filial love to blind him to the fact that his father was weak in comparison with his impetuous brother, Uncle Joseph. Indeed he never forgave his father for the meek spirit in which he had accepted their modest destiny Gobineau, on the maternal side, was descended from an illegitimate son of Louis XV His childhood could not have been particularly happy, considering the character of his mother, whom Ludwig Schemann calls a sort of refined "Carmen" Significantly, the female is always the defiling element in *Ottar Jarl*. Aside from this we know that his health was delicate, especially in childhood, that like other artistic temperaments he was nervous and high-strung

If we add to these data other factors making for a precocious mental development such as the education he received during his sojourn in Germany, the influence of Fichte and other German idealists and his early interest in the Orient, there is not much cause for wonder. It is evident that Gobineau came to associate what estimable qualities he discovered in himself and in those who surrounded him, with the Aryan race-factor His Aryanism was a kind of religion in which "blond" and "dark-haired" took on a symbolic significance

One is materially aided in ascertaining our author's motives for writing by the following passage, which occurs in the avant-propos to the second edition of the

Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines "Aussi bien ce livre est la base de tout ce que j'ai pu faire et ferai par la suite Je l'ai, en quelque sorte, commencé dès mon enfance .C'est l'expression des instincts apportés par moi en naissant J'ai été avide, dès le premier jour où j'ai réfléchi, et j'ai réfléchi de bonne heure, de me rendre compte de ma propre nature, parce que fortement saisi par cette maxime "connais-toi toi-même", je n'ai pas estimé que je pusse me connaître sans savoir ce qu'était le milieu dans lequel je venais vivre et qui, en partie, m'attirait à lui par la sympathie la plus passionnée et la plus tendre, en partie me dégoûtait et me remplissait de haine, de mépris et d'horreur J'ai donc fait mon possible pour pénétrer de mon mieux dans l'analyse de ce qu'on appelle d'une façon un peu plus générale qu'il ne faudrait l'espèce humaine, et c'est cette étude qui m'a appris ce que je raconte ici" Such a confession clarifies many things, it definitely ranges Gobineau among the great literary egotists Perhaps it is superfluous to say that a derogatory meaning need not attach to the word "egotism", the "culte du moi" may be merely a laudable desire for self-comprehension and self-realization.

Gobineau and Barrès

One is reminded by this passage of some sentences in *Sous l'Oeil des Barbares* where Maurice Barrès is engaged in a similarly careful delimitation of the self. It is known that at one stage in his development Barrès divided the world into himself and the "Barbarians". ". . comment excuser des déguisés sans le savoir, qui marchent vêtus de façons de sentir qui ne furent jamais les leurs? Ils introduisent le plus grand désordre dans

l'humanité; ils contredisent l'inconscient, en se dérochant à jouer le personnage pour lequel de toute éternité ils furent façonnés Ecoeurés de cette mascarade et de ces mélanges impurs, nous avons eu la passion d'être sincère et conforme à nos instincts Nous servons en sectaire la part essentielle de nous-même qui compose notre Moi, nous haïssons ces étrangers, ces Barbares, qui l'eussent corrodé" For all the differences in style and manner several of Gobineau's novels might be classed with those of Barrès, among the "romans de la vie intérieure".

Both Gobineau and Barrès belong in the vitalistic current. "La Vérité c'est ce qui satisfait les besoins de mon âme", said Barrès and this pragmatism is very goblinistic in spirit. The concept of race, however, was basic throughout our author's work Race was for Gobineau what the "milieu" was for Taine and the soil for Barrès In the *Essai*⁴¹ he spoke of ethnology as "la racine et la vie même de l'histoire"

Ludwig Schemann, his German biographer, places Gobineau with his emphasis on race between Hegel to whom reason was the substance of History and Schopenhauer who was wont to see the individual factor in all progress

Gobineau's most pronounced individualistic phase came in the last period of his life when he had come, in a sense, to despair of race Despite the shift in his thought which we shall demonstrate presently, it is clear that he was ever a race-mystic

If, as more than one writer has suggested, Gobineau's writings constitute a sort of autobiography, then indeed the following reveals much concerning his psychology. In the author's principal theoretical works

⁴¹ *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, Book IV, p 338

one is struck by an interesting fact. While the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, his most famous work, and the *Histoire des Perses* stressed change and transitoriness, *Ottar Jarl* was bent upon demonstrating permanence. The *Essai* studied the human species and its varieties and sought to show that decadence could not but result from the unavoidable mixture of these racial varieties. The *Histoire des Perses* studied the Aryan race as represented by the Persian nation. The *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl, pirate norvégien et de sa descendance* was meant to portray the Aryan family. Now it is interesting to observe that whereas in the first two of these books decadence, and indeed its inevitableness, were emphasized, the last mentioned seeks to prove the permanence of the essential traits characterizing a family, a people or a race.⁴² For Gobineau the family is a "higher being" than the race and represents its perfection. It does not change "Elle ne change donc pas, elle ne change jamais: ce qu'elle a été au commencement, elle l'a été à la fin, et à l'égard de l'Espèce, de la Variété, de la Race, elle est la démonstration de tout l'ensemble, la fleur et le fruit de l'arbre".⁴³

It was inevitable that the author should in the end substitute an individual hierarchy for his original ethnic hierarchy. Race as a concept had disappointed him. In the *Essai* whose pessimistic conclusions a strong vital

⁴² But the following passage occurring in the foreword to the second edition of the *Essai* (1882) is significant "J'ai écrit l'*Histoire des Perses* pour montrer par l'exemple de la nation ariane la plus isolée de ses congénères, combien sont impuissantes pour changer ou brider le génie d'une race, les différences de climat, de voisinage, et les circonstances de temps." The eventual decadence of this people was caused by mixture with other races. Compare with Ernest Seillière *Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique*, pp. 271, 389, and 437.

⁴³ *Ottar Jarl*, page 288.

instinct thus manages in some degree to obviate, the Count seemed forever to be deprecating this transitoriness. In civilizations and societies he admired "la durée", if he could admire Chinese civilization only with reservations, it being the product of the yellow race, his enthusiasm for Great Britain and the British Constitution was whole-hearted

One has the impression that the author of these works, whose ideal came to be successively incorporated in the concepts of race, the family and the individual, was in search of some permanent principle. It could be argued that this quest sprang partly from a personal sense of insecurity. *Ottar Jarl*, it must be remembered, gave the story of *his* family!

The discussion of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* would seem to belong in the first chapter. For practical purposes we prefer, before giving a résumé of the racial theory, to analyze its supplement, the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* which is a philosophical work on language. This gives us the metaphysical basis for Gobineau's thought and lends itself far better to a demonstration of our thesis.⁴⁴ Our author considered language and race to be closely connected and in this work in which he attempted to prove the decadence of languages, he showed a pessimism corresponding to that of his work on the races.

In our first chapter which analyzes the *Mémoire sur*

⁴⁴ The *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* is discussed by Seillière in *Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique* (p. 277), by Schemann in his *Biographie* (Volume II, pp. 50-67) and by Kretzer *J. A. Graf von Gobineau*, Leipzig, 1902 (pp. 172 and following). It cannot be said to have been adequately treated from the point of view of its meaning in Gobineau's philosophy.

diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle we aim to show the essential vitalism of that work one of whose main purposes is to prove the immortality of the soul. It contains Gobineau's attack on Descartes and rationalism and his plea for intuitive knowledge. The pluralism of the work is apparent despite its monistic form and the use of Spinoza's term "Substance". Gobineau saw "la substance" as a striving will. He endowed abstract terms with life and saw languages as "living beings". He insisted on the unconscious derivation of language and on the relative independence of languages of the mind of man. Each language had its own temperament or "mode de mouvement". Characteristically he attacked the logical word-order which distinguishes especially modern French, deeming it indicative of deterioration.

This *Mémoire* contains a vitalistic theory of truth, which it is interesting to compare with the pragmatism of William James. He also shows in it his strong opposition to the Buddhistic concept of Nirvana.

We compare Gobineau with Nietzsche and with a modern French writer, Jules de Gaultier, who has undergone Nietzschean influence. It will be seen that our author was a precursor since he had in common with them a number of tendencies. Like them he saw ethics as a part of Natural History and comparable to their viewpoint is his recognition of the Will to Power, his sympathy with illusion and his pragmatic tendency.⁴⁵ Certain Hindu symbols used by Gobineau are comparable to Nietzsche's Greek symbolism of Dionysos and Apollo.⁴⁶ Gobineau appears to have favored the active over the contemplative principle.

⁴⁵ Jules de Gaultier, despite some vitalistic tendencies, is an intellectualist. See Chapter I, pp. 47-49.

⁴⁶ See Chapter I, pp. 54 and 55.

The important thing about vitalism is the relativity it implies, its slighting of general truth in favor of individual truths. Our author's pluralism seems to have been a natural accompaniment of his vitalism: he was forever insisting on the phenomenal diversity of life. Gobineau was a pluralist who saw ideas as expressions of race, and at times went so far as to deny the existence of universal ideas.⁴⁷ Without claiming consistency for him, it is not too much to say that his attitude much of the time was that of a pragmatist. This is seen most clearly in the matter of religion.

There is a passage in Nietzsche⁴⁸ to which our author would probably have subscribed. In it the German thinker declares that science takes cognizance of man rather than of truth. Its object is to ascertain how man — not the individual — feels with respect to himself and to all things.

In our second chapter we give a résumé of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*. In spite of the fact that Gobineau's vitalism is limited by his racial determinism, this work may be said to be definitely vitalistic in spirit.⁴⁹ His determinism never became fatalism. It

⁴⁷ The following excerpt, taken from the middle of a sentence, is to be found in the manuscript of a letter intended for Leo Drouyn on the subject of *Ottar Jarl*: "... mais, sporadique comme est toute idée, car il ne saurait en exister d'universelles ". Quoted by Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, p. 478.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. XII, p. 314 (343), München, 1924. See W. M. Salter, *Nietzsche the Thinker*.

⁴⁹ See Gobineau's theory of racial instinct (in this Introduction, p. 8, and Conclusion, p. 230). The author saw societies as biological organisms (See Chapter II, on the racial theory, p. 93). Also in the *Essai*, II, p. 491, the paragraph which ends " la vitalité ce dont seulement il s'agit dans ce livre, ou ne saurait trop s'en pénétrer " Gobineau characterizes the Aryan as predominantly active or utilitarian. See Chapter II, on the racial theory, pp. 9, 19 and 20, Chapter I, pp. 54 and 55.

is, at first sight, not very clear, in view of the pessimism of his work on the races, how the author could have developed something so very like a Nietzschean voluntarism

There remains for us, in the two ensuing chapters, to trace two important currents of vitalism in Gobineau's work, the Nietzschean trend which is a type of individualism and traditionalism where the interest is mainly social. We shall find almost ever-present and with varying compromises the conflict between the individual and the state.

In our third chapter we show the psychology of the youthful Gobineau, his practicality and social sense, his reason for rallying to Bonaparte, his scorn for the "mal du siècle" and the originality of his position as a literary critic and theorist. Adaptation for him was so difficult as to constitute a real problem. Gobineau very early manifested a vitalistic attitude in his enthusiasm for the Condottieri of sixteenth century Italy.

M. Robert Dreyfus has given a very good explanation of the relationship between our author and the modern French nationalists. In his relativity Gobineau seems indeed to come close to the central idea of contemporary French nationalism according to which there is no such thing as an impersonal and universal social truth, the view that in social matters there can only be local and temporary action. The significant difference between him and the nationalists lies in the great importance he attaches to the racial factor, while regarding national boundaries as of relatively little consequence. He was a convinced regionalist and traditionalist without ever approaching the narrow nationalism of a Barrès.

It seems not to have been sufficiently realized that Gobineau was in his fiction, in the philosophical novel, *Les Pléiades* and other novels and short stories where he showed a fondness for satirizing scepticism, a forerunner of Maurice Barrès and Paul Bourget and of some more recent novelists with vitalistic tendencies. One can observe in Gobineau a preoccupation with the theme of decadence quite similar to that of some of his successors.

We also treat in this third chapter of Gobineau's vitalism as shown in his philosophy of history, his subjectivism and impressionism. Our author's attitude to the Orient and to Orientals was also determined by his vitalism, as we attempt to show.

In religion, again, he tended to be pragmatic. Nothing is more manifest than Gobineau's anti-intellectualism. For this and other reasons he has been compared with Jean Jacques Rousseau. We considered it important to distinguish Gobineau's individualism rather carefully from that of Rousseau.

In Chapter four we analyze *Les Pléiades*, our author's philosophical novel, which is remarkable for a kind of voluntarism, his conception of the "fils de roi" foreshadows Nietzsche's superman. If there is a contradiction between this and the racial determinism of the *Essai*, it is less of a one than that represented by the mood to which Nietzsche gave expression in his doctrine of the "Eternal Return".

We maintain that Count de Gobineau was in search of an ideal of conduct for moderns. He deplored the undue modern emphasis upon the virtue of adaptability, and the many references in his works to the Germanic freeman of the Middle Ages lead one to suppose that it

is there that he found the closest approximation to his ideal

In Gobineau there is always noticeable the conflict between his strong social sense and his insistence on individual right. Vitalism is discernible in the historical novel *Ternove* in the frustration of the hero Octave who could not achieve unity of purpose, and more definitely in *Les Pléiades* which attacks dilettantism in the character of Louis Laudon and scepticism in the portrayal of Countess Tonska. In some passages of that novel Gobineau approaches the cult of the emotions of Barrès. In *La Renaissance (Savonarole)* a fine passage, which we cite, embodies the master-morality. Finally, in two parallel passages, equally vitalistic in spirit, we compare Gobineau with Joseph Conrad.

We have averred that our author achieved a degree of consistency. His traditionalism, which was necessarily in conflict with his individualism, might be said to derive from two sources. It seems, on the one hand, to be the natural accompaniment of an aristocratic conservatism, but on the other it is certainly in accord with vitalistic theory which deems tradition the social equivalent of instinct. As for his efforts to safeguard regional autonomy and to prevent the blighting of the life of the provinces through centralization, these were incontestably consistent with his vitalism. Maurice Barrès has expressed his gratitude for Gobineau's work in behalf of regionalism in the middle of the last century at which time the movement had scarcely gotten under way.

Gobineau and Barrès, moreover, both recognized the danger of the disappearance of faith and of the undermining of values in all spheres by relativistic thinking. They too were relativists, though of a different sort.

In their traditionalism, no less than in their advocacy of a strong individualism, they were bent upon saving values out of the general wreckage. Both were aghast at the weakness of moral fibre resulting from the prevailing scepticism. In his dedication of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* to King George V of Hanover our author queries "whether energy has passed from man to steam?"

With his cult of energy and his interest in the man of action Gobineau has much in common with Stendhal and Mérimée. His view of French History resembles that of Hippolyte Taine. He has found a disciple in the aristocratic Paul Bourget, especially as regards race and the importance of tradition. In England he could be likened to Carlyle and in America to Ralph Waldo Emerson.⁵⁰

The significance of Count de Gobineau's message can be understood only if one is familiar with the history of vitalism. It is through Nietzsche whose meaning is coming to be better apprehended, that we may appreciate Gobineau.

⁵⁰ See Arnold Rowbotham *The Literary Works of Gobineau*, pp 33 (Gobineau and Emerson), 48-50 (Gobineau and Carlyle), p 74 (Gobineau and Taine), 58 and 68 (Gobineau and Henri Beyle, Stendhal). Gobineau's debt to Stendhal is very obvious and has been mentioned by many a writer on Gobineau.

I — GOBINEAU THE METAPHYSICIAN

A philosophical work on language entitled *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle*, which was completed in Athens in the year 1866, gives us a sort of confession of faith. A curious mixture of science, metaphysics and mysticism, it is really little more than an improvisation, the author being in epistemology and ontology, which were to him foreign fields, an eclectic incapable of great originality. This treatise was intended to complement the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*. He announced it in the following way in a letter to his friend Prokesch von Osten on June 20th, 1856 "C'est à la fois, l'anatomie des langues au point de vue de leur vraie nature, et la démonstration de leur décadence graduelle avant le Sanscrit jusqu'aux langues modernes". Interesting in some portions as a contribution to philology, it is especially valuable in that it introduces us into the heart of his conceptual system, it gives us the metaphysical basis of his thought and helps to explain his other writings.

The work which he had begun in the early days in Bern and Frankfurt and continued at Teheran, had despite interruptions never ceased to occupy his mind. It finally appeared in the German language at Halle in 1868 under the title *Untersuchungen über verschiedene Ausserungen des sporadischen Lebens*".¹

In the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* Gobineau is apparently in search of a per-

¹ *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* (Halle 1868). The original French manuscript has been lost. A copy is in the Gobineau museum in Strasbourg.

manent principle, something to hold fast to in the phenomenal flux.

All human thinking springs from two sources which have been named, respectively, the "instinct vital" and the "instinct de connaissance" To the extent that knowledge has vital human utility there is no conflict Many inconsistencies in thinkers, however, are owing to a conflict between these two tendencies There are many such inconsistencies in Gobineau, though we can mention only a few here In History and Religion, for instance, he is often close to the position of a pragmatist and we have quoted him in our Introduction as saying that there are no universal ideas Then in this philosophical treatise on language we come across the words "idées absolues" and it is clear that the author clings strongly to the notion of "objective truth" Again, in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité*. , in contradiction with his general relativistic view, he conceives beauty to be absolute, agreeing with the position of Vincenzo Gioberti ²

The *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* is in three parts of which only the middle one is philological and the other two metaphysical. It is rather lacking in unity The author begins by connecting the work with certain passages of the Conclusion of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* which have apparently not been understood by his readers and need to be supplemented.³

Gobineau's purpose in the *Essai* had been to show that the phenomena afforded by the development of so-

² Vincenzo Gioberti, Italian philosopher, publicist and Politician (1801-1852) *Introduzione allo studio della filosofia Del Bello. Del Buono*

³ *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, Conclusion Générale, page 545 (Second Edition, 1884)

cieties bore a striking resemblance to those perceived in the evolutions of organic substance. He considered History proper a part of Natural History. The *Essai* had aimed to understand "la constitution interne du monde social". The connection between the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* and this philosophical work is, in point of fact, not always obvious, but it is certain that Gobineau considers language and race intimately connected, he traces in languages a deterioration by mutual contact corresponding to the racial decadence brought about by fusion. He develops further his ideas as to the inequality of the different languages.

In the passage of the epilogue to the *Essai*, to which he refers the reader, he had tried to establish the existence of racial souls that lived with a life of their own and possessed true individuality. This endeavor was similar to that of the German philosopher Fechner, who at about the same time was giving his people a modernized version of the ancient Babylonian doctrine which attributed souls to planets and other heavenly bodies. One is indeed often reminded of Fechner in reading the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle*.⁴

Immediately after the Introduction the author devotes some space to an attack on what he calls "la pruderie métaphysique". He argues that in philosophical research there should be a compromise between abstraction and perception. Empirical knowledge, observation and induction must complement pure metaphysical reasoning. Moreover, in his use of the words "senti-

⁴ Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801-1887), German experimental psychologist. Wrote *Nanna, oder über das Seelenleben der Pflanzen* (1848). *Elemente der Psychophysik* (1860).

ment intime" and "sentiment commun" he seems to make a plea for intuitive knowledge, for what Berthelot calls "le sentiment immédiat." "Ce que la métaphysique s'avoue la plus impuissante à affirmer, c'est précisément ce qui est le plus indubitable pour la sensation, à savoir le monde matériel" " . Descartes a prononcé que nous n'avions la conscience assurée de la vie que par le fait que nous pensions. Cependant, tout réclame contre un tel arrêt Le sentiment intime ne s'y rend pas On éprouve au contraire une conviction très forte que de tous les faits qui nous entourent, les faits métaphysiques restent les moins saisissables, les moins convainquants, les moins assurés On les voit dériver bien moins des questions en elles-mêmes, que de la façon dont ces questions sont posées; il suffit d'une erreur (et quoi de plus facile que d'errer dans un tel calcul?) pour donner à des nuages la valeur de réalité" .⁵ Elsewhere Gobineau has expressed his opinion of Descartes and rationalism more frankly. In connection with his translation into Persian of the *Discours de la Méthode* which he had undertaken for his Persian friends, he says in a letter to Prokesch von Osten "Je vous avoue en toute humilité que Descartes me paraît misérable, et l'idée que l'homme fini peut découvrir l'infini par une série de calculs certains une des plus grandes inepties qui ait jamais passé par une tête humaine. Mais comme c'est européen! Les Asiatiques se trompent sans doute, ils ont pourtant une chose de leur côté *c'est la grandeur et la puissance et la hardiesse de leurs hypothèses.*"

⁵ The following passage is to be found in the fifth section of the first part: "Du reste le sentiment commun a toujours eu l'instinct que la vie personnelle n'était pas seulement présenté dans les corps organisés, comme on l'entend d'ordinaire. Pour chaque homme pensant l'idée vit, l'idée vivifie, remue et fait remuer."

(Italics mine) This last sentence is not without significance and would have pleased Nietzsche ⁶ There is an interesting allegorical poem on "Error and Truth" in Gobineau's *Paradis de Béowulf*, which champions the usefulness of error and is throughout Nietzschean in spirit ⁷

There can be no doubt that Oriental mysticism had its part in shaping the Count's personality It is certainly discernible in the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* *

Gobineau's philosophy, as it appears in this treatise, is in form an idealistic or spiritualistic monism Almost at the beginning we find this fundamental monistic proposition "L'Etre et la pensée, la vie et la conscience sont parties inséparables d'un même aggrégat" The author also uses the spinozistic term "La Substance" throughout. This, however, can not deceive us nor lead us to retract our statement that Gobineau is a pluralist. Appearances to the contrary, this work is also definitely pluralistic He is chiefly interested in individual life. Immediately following this monistic proposition he states his intention to confine himself to the use of "quite another criterium" in his endeavors to seek out and recognize the "manifestations of individual life." "Laissons donc de côté l'essence même de l'être et pre-

⁶ *Nietzsche the Thinker* by William Mackintire Salter, pages 187 and 482, Nietzsche on the Will to Illusion as shown in *Will to Power, Joyful Science, Genealogy of Morals* Compare also Hans Vaihinger *Die Philosophie des Als-Ob*, page 354, on Nietzsche's "Perspektivismus"

⁷ On *Le Paradis de Béowulf* (originally *La Vision d'Angilbert*) see Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineau*, Volume II, pp 147-158 The model for the poem was Dante's *Divina Commedia* Professor Schemann does not consider the Christian spirit in Gobineau's poem quite convincing We reproduce the allegorical poem *Error and Truth* in the appendix It is also in Schemann's collection *Quellen und Untersuchungen zum Leben Gobineaus*, Volume II.

nous les attributs, du moins les principaux. Là où nous parviendrons à en constater l'existence, nous serons fondés à décider que nous trouvons la vie proprement dite, la vie individuelle, personnelle, sporadique." The author's main interest is in vital phenomena. "L'individu est l'être". The aim of "La Substance", as he says in Part III, is "la détermination sporadique" for the purpose of obtaining "la plus grande somme de vie possible". Individuality can never disappear. "La vie porte donc avec elle, comme son véhicule indispensable, comme sa caractéristique, la tendance à l'individualité. Hors de là, pas de vie et on peut prononcer hardiment que ce qui n'est pas individuel, deviendra mais n'est pas."

Matter and mind and matter and life are distinct, though they interact ". , quoi que soit la matière, quoi que soit la vie, qu'il faille ou non, considérer l'une et l'autre dans leur principe comme des mises en action d'une seule et même substance, il n'en est pas moins clair que dans l'état où nous les observons, ce sont deux expositions distinctes l'une de l'autre. La matière est une chose, la vie en est une autre. " There was undoubtedly a conflict in the author's mind between monism and pluralism, but we consider the words "dans l'état où nous les observons" as sufficiently suggestive of what was paramount. We know that he rejected both Scholastic dualism and Kant's dualism of noumena and phenomena. He considered matter and mind different manifestations of one underlying "Substance". "Il est . . . nécessaire de considérer la substance indépendamment de l'abstraction pour réussir à la comprendre, et on ne la divisera pas en deux fractions de constitution absolument opposées, la matérielle et l'idéale. Elle est variée

en elle-même, comme on l'a vu, mais continue et dans l'essentiel homogène . ." This passage occurs in the third part and a little further he says "Il n'y a donc pas deux choses distinctes dans la nature: "La Matière", "l'Esprit" Il n'y a qu'un fait la substance qui embrasse tout, emplit tout, est tout, qui n'a pas d'en dehors Et ce point fixé, cet ensemble une fois embrassé, autant qu'il peut l'être, par l'esprit de l'homme, impuissant d'ailleurs à comprendre tout entier, puisqu'il n'est lui-même qu'un cercle inscrit dans cette sphère, rappelons encore qu'aucune analyse, aucune expérience, soit positive, soit métaphysique n'autorisent dans aucun cas à admettre que cette même substance rattachée à l'identité par un substrat général, puisse jamais voir disparaître de son sein les différences, c'est à dire l'individualité des éléments qui concourent à la former " " Il y a donc un moment où l'identité de la substance rencontre la complexité de la substance "

These quotations must have made the conflict very apparent. The relation of the One to the Many, of the all-form to the each-form has been a philosophic problem through the ages That the author derived some emotional satisfaction from the use of Spinoza's term "La Substance" is certain, but as to which tendency actually prevailed in him there can scarcely be any doubt. In this essay Gobineau presents his philosophy as a monism, but this, after a searching examination, impresses one as a mere façade, or, if that is putting it too strongly, it is certain that much of the structure behind it has crumbled and given way to pluralism. He makes it manifest enough throughout the treatise that his real interest is in the each-form, in the phenomenal diversity of life.

We may indeed safely take our clue from the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*. He there says in the Conclusion Générale, to quote but one short passage. ". . fussent-elles nées d'un seul couple; les variétés humaines, éternellement distinctes, vivent sous la loi de la multiplicité des types, et leur unité primordiale ne saurait exercer et n'exerce sur leurs destinées la plus impondérable conséquence". This great work on the races furnishes the best proof that Gobineau saw the world as the scene of contrary forces and processes.

There is a definite trend among modern thinkers to go back to Heraclitus. Whether we think of a universe or of a multiverse, we are apt to see life as a becoming. There is agreement in this respect between such widely differing writers as Nietzsche, Bergson and Jules de Gaultier.⁸ One is reminded of Bergson and his Heraclitean "devenir réel" in certain passages of Gaultier's *Le Bovarysme*. "La réalité phénoménale, a-t-on dit, est située dans le devenir. Empiriquement à notre vue l'univers se meut. . . La réalité consiste en un certain état de ralentissement du mouvement." Elsewhere in the same work he says that the self ("le moi ou l'esprit") by an "analytic gesture" divides and delimits, separating object from subject, perception from sensation and so on indefinitely. This "mouvement de dissociation", however, is held in check by a contrary tendency to associate: ". . il modère cette force de dissociation qu'il a tout d'abord déchaînée et contraint, par un geste contraire, quelques parties de cette substance, qui va se désagrégant, à s'associer selon des combinaisons vari-

⁸ Jules de Gaultier, modern French writer on philosophical subjects, author of *De Kant à Nietzsche*, *Le Bovarysme*, *La Fiction Universelle*. He has developed an Art-Philosophy which shows strongly the influence of Schopenhauer, though it is free both from the latter's pessimism and his tendency toward Buddhist asceticism.

ables, d'une durée plus ou moins longue, d'une solidité plus ou moins grande, selon qu'il les comprime avec plus ou moins de force" It is by this "double gesture" that the phenomenal world is created and knowledge becomes possible

Jules de Gaultier's "mouvement ralenti" makes one think of Bergson's "mouvement inverse". The latter writes in *l'Evolution Créatrice* "En réalité la vie est un mouvement, la matérialité est le mouvement inverse, et chacun de ces deux mouvements est simple, la matière qui forme un monde étant un flux indivisé, indivisée aussi étant la vie qui la traverse en y découpant des êtres vivants De ces deux courants le second contrarie le premier, mais le premier obtient tout de même quelque chose du second il en résulte entre eux un "modus vivendi", qui est précisément l'organisation. Cette organisation prend pour nos sens et pour notre intelligence la forme de parties entièrement extérieures à des parties dans le temps et dans l'espace"

There is a strong resemblance in the conceptions of these two writers for all the difference in the way they are expressed. The analytical power or gesture of Gaultier "sunders and divides ceaselessly the continuous and homogeneous", but while Bergson deems it possible for human beings to realize the "undivided flux of life" by intuition, Jules de Gaultier denies this absolutely. "Il apparaît suffisamment qu'il n'est pas de connaissance possible de l'indivisible et du continu. ." With the Bergsonian conception of the "élan vital"⁹ goes a trust in in-

⁹ In *Creative Evolution* Bergson writes "La conscience, chez l'homme, est surtout intelligence Elle aurait pu, elle aurait dû, semblait-il, être aussi intuition Intuition et intelligence représentent deux directions opposées du travail conscient l'intuition marche dans le sens même de la vie, l'intelligence va en sens inverse, et se trouve ainsi tout naturellement réglée sur le mouvement de la matière"

tution as a legitimate mode of obtaining knowledge. Bergson's "mouvement inverse" includes both "mouvements" or "gestes" distinguished by Gaultier, that is to say the intellectual function in its two aspects, analytical and synthetic. Both writers, however, saw reality as something in movement, or flux.

In the value he attaches to intuition Bergson is, of course, much closer to Gobineau. Jules de Gaultier is an intellectualist with only a vitalistic "Einschlag", as the Germans would say.

Count de Gobineau's philosophy, as we find it in this work, has points of contact with Spinoza's Pantheism, with the Idealism of Hegel, the "Absolute Ego" of J. G. Fichte, the "World-Soul" of Schelling, the Schopenhaurian "Will" and the "Unconscious" of E. von Hartmann.¹⁰ One could also compare certain aspects of it with the metaphysics of the Nietzsche of the first period when he was under Schopenhauer's influence.

Two things are clear from Gobineau's vocabulary: first that he sees life and reality as a becoming, as something fluid and in continual motion and secondly that "La Substance" is for him a striving will. He speaks, for example, of "la conscience" as "l'effort de la vie". Like many another thinker he encounters great difficulty in his attempts to account for the fluidity of phenomenal reality by means of static concepts. This work represents, in that respect, an interesting stage in philosophical speculation. A comparison with Jules de Gaultier can here be useful and interesting.

¹⁰ K. R. E. von Hartmann *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten*, Berlin, 1869. Maurice Barrès was influenced by this work. See his *Le Jardin de Béatrice* which is supposed to be "l'Inconscient" of Hartmann "en action." (*Sous l'Oeil des Barbares*, Examen, page 28).

The third part of the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* begins with the following passage: "La plénitude la plus grande possible de la conscience, là sensation vive de l'être, d'être individuellement, d'être séparément de tout le reste, de la substance ambiante, d'être pour soi et en soi, peut seule être admise comme conférant la vie complète. A quelque autre stage que l'on considère comme celle-ci, elle s'aperçoit en voie de formation; elle ne s'arrête pas, elle monte, mais à vrai dire, elle n'est pas, seulement elle est en travail pour devenir. Il faut donc chercher la vie et l'observer dans son épanouissement le plus grand, connu, qui est l'individualité et non pas dans ses origines qui ne la fournissent pas réellement." The direction of evolution is from original unity to phenomenal diversity, from the primal will¹¹ of "La Substance" to its expression in individual wills. "On doit dire, en toute assurance que le moment où la substance ne tend pas à l'état sporadique n'existe pas, on n'a jamais saisi la substance en flagrant délit d'immobilité et du moment qu'elle remue, c'est pour chercher les moyens de produire un corps isolé . . ." "Ce qui est généralité, ce qui laisse voir la vie une, commune, semblable, continue, de même espèce, de même valeur, ce qui favorise ou semble favoriser l'hypothèse de l'identité absolue de la substance, n'est que le résultat artificiel de l'analyse concluant, non pas sur ce que la substance est en elle-même, mais sur les procédés que la substance emploie pour obtenir la plus grande somme de vie possible, procédés qui, en effet, sont les mêmes, principale-

¹¹ Gobineau did not use the expression "primal will" but he could have done so, it is obviously what he meant. Nietzsche in *Birth of Tragedy* calls it "Das Ur-Eine".

ment dans les premiers stades du développement de tous les germes ”

Gobineau's favorite concept is that of the "individual sporadic being" He attributed "la vie sporadique", that is to say independent spiritual existence to abstract concepts, to ideas and even to languages But there was, in his opinion, a hierarchy among these "sporadic existences", the highest point in the development being represented by the individual human consciousness

We shall see that in his search for a permanent principle Gobineau is led to attempt two solutions His argument at the end for personal immortality strikes one as an inconsistency, he had originally appeared to content himself with establishing the permanence of the different species

In his conception of the nature of Space and Time our author resembles Schleiermacher, E. von Hartmann and especially Immanuel Hermann Fichte¹² whom he quotes and to whose position he professes adherence All four authors disagree with the subjective idealism of Kant and Schopenhauer, denying that space and time are purely subjective forms of the phenomenal world and seeing in them rather forms of the objective, real world Time and Space, according to Gobineau, should be considered "les enveloppes nécessaires de toute entité". I H. Fichte was right in saying that "L'Espace" et le "Temps" n'ont, en eux-mêmes, aucune réalité ou puissance à l'égard de l'âme ou de quelque entité que ce soit, attendu qu'ils ne sont rien que des conséquences immédiates de l'Etre, et de la persistance interne de

¹² Immanuel Hermann Fichte, German philosopher, son of J. G. Fichte (born in 1797).

toute entité". Surprisingly, Gobineau does not commit himself on the subject of causality

Explaining the world and its phenomena is the ultimate aim of all science and philosophy. Unfortunately, there is contradiction between our necessary instrument, reason, which can proceed only by means of identity and the reality of the world which is essentially irrational and thus continually eludes identification. All we can know is phenomenal reality which comes about by an arbitrary act of the mind immobilizing a portion of the flux. Jules de Gaultier calls this the "principe d'arrêt". What we call reality, then, is only an equilibrium between contrary forces. This must have a certain duration, it is not too much to say that without a passionate belief in "objective truth" it would never be maintained.

There is without doubt an antinomy between reality which is intrinsically fluid, ever in a state of change and becoming, and the notion of a fixed, unique and immutable truth. Yet for any aspect of the phenomenal flux to become properly perceptible or "realized", this act of faith is requisite. As the result of our working with static concepts the real appears to be stationary.

There are certain primary unities or "categories" of thought which have achieved priority over all others. The notions of time, space and causality seem to most of us indispensable, but this may be conceived as being due simply to the fact of their having gained the adherence of the human mind over eons of time. Almost equally important as these categories and the notion of objective truth, are the illusion of the human personality

and the illusion of free will¹³ With his racial determinism Gobineau could, of course, admit the freedom of the will only in a very restricted sense He was, however, completely under the illusion of human individuality and his strong vital instinct refused to acknowledge that this unit could be mortal

Human utility in general and the subjective factor of temperament in particular, preside at the formation of any reality that we can know. Whether one take the viewpoint of intellectualism, considering knowledge to be the aim and life but a means, or the opposite one which puts happiness in living first and estimates everything else as ancillary to this, it is clear that reality as such is in any case a balance of power, each conception deriving its reality from the limits imposed upon it by its opposite. There can, for instance, be no object without a subject and vice versa

In the third part of the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* the author says "L'Être interne,¹⁴ pourvu de la conscience, est dirigé vers la connaissance, c'est à dire vers l'appréhension de la substance totale" Similarly Jules de Gaultier makes of "le désir de connaissance intégrale" "le principe de la vie phénoménale"¹⁵ This seems to imply on the part of

¹³ Jules de Gaultier has expressed this very ably in *Le Bovarysme* page 271. "L'Intervention de la memoire, element indispensable du fait de la conscience, a pour effet de resserrer dans la minute presente et de maintenir unis ensemble deux tronçons de la duree qui tendent à se séparer, l'un de l'autre, s'enfuyant vers les directions opposees de l'avenir et du passé C'est par l'entremise de ce principe d'arrêt et de concentration que s'erigent, au-dessus de l'écoulement de la substance phenoménale, ces observatoires ou la vie prend conscience d'elle-même dans l'illusion de l'individualité et de la personne." This has a Bergsonian ring!

¹⁴ Schemann in his Biography of Gobineau (Volume II, page 66) translates "être interne" as "der geistige Mensch".

¹⁵ Jules de Gaultier *Le Bovarysme*, page 269

Gobineau no less than in the case of Gaultier an intellectualist slant But let us not judge too hastily in this matter

In the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* our author has recourse to Hindu symbolism, typifying the subjective or active attitude, the "instinct to satisfy material needs" with "Pouroucha" or the masculine principle, and the objective faculty or contemplative habit, the "instinct de la vie morale" with "Prakriti" or the feminine principle It is obvious that neither tendency could exist alone or independent of the other. A healthy balance between them must be the ideal Jules de Gaultier's "principe d'acte" and "principe contemplatif" correspond to these symbols employed by Gobineau.¹⁶

There can be little doubt that this is essentially what Nietzsche meant when, in the realm of art, he made the distinction between the Dionysian and the Apollinic experience Apollo would appear to correspond to Prakriti and Dionysos to Pouroucha Wm M Salter writes in the chapter entitled "Function of Art" of his work *Nietzsche the Thinker*. "Nietzsche says that the Dionysiac man is an art-work, not an artist For he is not so much looking at life as in a picture and finding relief in detaching it from himself, as entering it afresh, re-experiencing its joy and its pain, saying yes even to what is tragic in it In short, the Apollinic type man looks at life, the Dionysiac relives it The truth is, the Dionysiac experience is *material* for art, it is a subject that may be artistically treated — and this is what

¹⁶ *Le Bovarysme*, page 268 "Le moi psychologique n'est pas autre chose que le lieu où la substance de l'être se divise, selon une infinité de proportions, en objet et en sujet et compose, pour se saisir, une infinité de compromis entre un principe d'acte et un principe contemplatif"

Nietzsche really (or logically) means, the justification for his speaking of a second art-impulse being simply that the material has been so used. For out of the Dionysian festival grew that supreme form of Greek art, the tragic drama, this may be briefly characterized as an Apollinic treatment of the Dionysiac experience—a marriage of the two”¹⁷

Now it is rather significant, in judging as to which of these two tendencies prevailed in Gobineau, that he should have credited his ideal Aryan with being predominantly utilitarian. “Viennent maintenant les peuples blancs. De l’énergie réfléchie, ou pour mieux dire, une intelligence énergique; *le sens de l’utile, mais dans une signification de ce mot beaucoup plus large, plus élevée, plus courageuse, plus idéale que chez les nations jaunes; . .*”¹⁸ (Italics mine)

In certain passages of the *Histoire des Perses*, as well as in his correspondence from which we shall have occasion to quote, we are reminded of Nietzsche and his distaste for the “objective man” who tends to be a mirror pure and simple.¹⁹

Along with marked differences there are some very interesting resemblances between the philosophy of Gobineau and that of Jules de Gaultier. In reading the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* one has at times a curious impression of being in the presence of a peculiarly apt illustration of Gaultier’s philosophy. The author is seen to be dominated

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche makes this distinction between the Dionysiac and the Apollinic art-experience in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

¹⁸ *Essai sur l’Inégalité des Races Humaines*, Tome I, Chapitre XVI, page 216 (Second edition, 1884).

¹⁹ See Hans Vaihinger *Philosophie des Als-Ob*, page 354, on Nietzsche’s “Perspektivismus”. (Volksausgabe, Leipzig, 1924)

alternately by his vital instinct and by his desire for knowledge. Viewing his life-work as a whole, one observes him wavering between a relativistic way of thinking and a faith in absolute truth. A striking illustration of this arbitrary "principe d'arrêt" of the human mind, is the fact that in the face of the pessimism of the *Essai* Gobineau could regard the family as a "higher being" than the race and that he could have become the individualist that he was. The chief difference between the two writers lies in the extent to which Gobineau allows himself to be dominated by his concepts, in the capacity for illusion of these concepts. Nevertheless our author seems aware of the provisional nature of scientific concepts and hypotheses, of their instrumental character.²⁰ He says "ce que nous appelons la matière" and on the eighth page of Part I, of the *Mémoire* occurs this passage: "Ce n'est qu'avec grand'peine et en faisant abstraction d'une foule de conditions de la vie, que l'on arrive à détacher, à isoler, à considérer à part la cellule parente si proche de la monade, pour y pouvoir signaler la première forme vitale, bien rudimentaire assurément et qui toutefois présentant encore la dualité, doit être signalée comme étant elle-même un milieu." The "milieu", of which we shall speak more presently, was perhaps Gobineau's favorite "Denkmittel." Let us now enumerate some of the main points of resemblance between Gobineau and Jules de Gaultier. Both saw life as a becoming. Like Nietzsche and his predecessor

²⁰ The careful definition of and distinction between fictions and hypotheses is of more recent date. See Hans Vaihinger *Philosophie des Als-Ob*, pages 90-92. This was written between 1876 and 1878. The twenty-seventh chapter entitled *Ideenverschöbung* explains the tendency of hypotheses to become dogmas, of fictions to become hypotheses or even dogmas directly. Gobineau tended to use fictions naïvely. A good example is his use of the fiction of the organism.

Gaultier saw ethics as a "chapter of Natural History". Like Gobineau he was wont to compare social groups to biological organisms. Though an intellectualist he recognized the "Will to Power" and resembled Gobineau in showing a decided Nietzschean trend in his thought.²¹ Both writers were in ethics aristocrats, opposing the Rousseau-born rationalism of Kant's "Categorical Imperative". They recognized the diversity of moral temperaments. Finally, Jules de Gaultier understood as well or better than Gobineau the "will to illusion". For him the Christian ideal was a "conception bovaryque" vitally useful to the "hordes barbares".²² This view is very similar to the pragmatic attitude assumed by our author toward Christianity.²³

Gobineau is interesting to compare with Gaultier because he so often seems to be striving to express much the same thought in different words. We shall illustrate this with quotations. If our author succeeds less well than the latter in accounting for the fluidity of reality, it is because of his concepts, which, once chosen, admitted of no retreat. Gobineau's preferred concept was, we have said, that of the "individual sporadic being". He bases this principle of individuation on the contention that without individuality the "substance" would remain "complètement insaisissable". A favorite "Denkmittel" with him, though subservient, was what he called the "milieu", the enveloping medium necessary to each and every sporadic being, whether material or spiritual.

²¹ Gaultier differs from Gobineau in that he recognizes possibilities of human evolution which the latter's racial determinism denies.

²² Jules de Gaultier *Le Bovarysme*, pages 239-40 and 291-292.

²³ See Ludwig Schemann's Biography of Gobineau, also *Quellen und Untersuchungen zum Leben Gobineau's*, Volume II, especially pages 407-408 and 420-421. See also Chapter III, pp 136-138 of the present work.

These "milieux" or media he saw as "essentiellement solubles et transitoires"

According to Gobineau abstract concepts lived, he accepted the dictum of the realists "omne concipiendum vivit" "Tout ce qui se donne à connaître est d'une manière ou d'une autre manifesté, on doit d'autant plus admettre comme placées dans cet état les existences supposées immatérielles qu'elles tombent plus complètement que les autres sous le regard de l'esprit, lequel est constitué de façon à s'en rendre un compte particulièrement exact, à en refléter des images tout à fait frappantes "

The notion of form, whose function is essentially to delimit the object to which it is applied, does not necessarily imply tangibility Form can be revealed independently of matter. "Les formes immatérielles se précisent avec tout autant de netteté que les autres, car sans elles, l'esprit ne percevrait que chaos, pour ne pas tomber sous les sens de l'homme, elles n'en sont pas moins sévèrement dessinées et exactes L'oeil n'est pas admis à les atteindre, mais l'esprit les touche, il se rend compte qu'une idée est distincte d'une autre idée, circonscrite à elle-même et se maintenant pour cette raison dans une situation sporadique" " . du foyer commun du point et de la ligne, de ce foyer où la ligne et le point ne sont qu'eux-mêmes, pris dans leur valeur absolue, se meuvent deux irradiations, s'épandant dans des directions opposées. Tandis que l'une débrouille l'amas matériel, l'autre classe l'amas abstrait Cette double imposition fait reconnaître là où elle s'arrête, non pas la vie, mais l'individualité et, par là, elle se montre, dans les deux sphères, comme étant l'un des attributs indispensables de la vie, car sans individualité, il n'y a pas d'appétition,

il n'y a pas de répulsion, il n'y a pas de mouvement, il n'y a pas de perpétuité" We quote a few more passages so that Gobineau's view of the relation of mind and matter may become clearer " . de même que la matière contient des corps premiers étrangers les uns aux autres, en tant que corps premiers, et cependant susceptibles de se combiner, parce qu'en somme ils sont matière et possèdent en commun tels et tels attributs de la matière, de même la substance contient la matière et l'esprit, qui se combinent constamment, qui ne vivent pas l'un sans l'autre et pour lesquels des rapports si étroits s'expliquent, malgré les différences, par le fait que matière et esprit possèdent également et en commun les attributs principaux de la substance, l'attraction, la détermination des parties par le rayonnement commun, qui produit le temps et l'espace, la soumission aux mêmes lois de manifestation et de développement." Elsewhere, at the end of a long sentence which we can not quote in its entirety, there occurs this passage: "la somme totale des molécules inorganiques entraînées dans un mouvement continu, a pour vocation de fournir l'élément plastique sur lequel viennent s'imprimer les formes des innombrables catégories d'existences." "La chaîne de productions organiques et inorganiques qui s'étend du corps solide offert par la roche de première formation, jusqu'à la diffusion des fluides impondérables n'a pas encore laissé apercevoir un point où elle s'arrête . . . on serait conduit à admettre que les manifestations matérielles tendent sans cesse nullement, vers un état qui, d'après la façon ordinaire de raisonner, aurait perdu la majeure partie des attributs considérés comme le plus inhérents à la matière. Je

parle, bien entendu, de l'ensemble des êtres organisés et non des individus"²⁴

The author is often close to the idealistic monism of a Schelling

Each sporadic being is required to live in its medium or "milieu" to which it is specially adapted and from which it draws its nourishment. The earth, the stellar spheres, the human body and the mind constitute "autant d'enveloppes de cette nature"²⁵. Beings of all categories are to be considered under two aspects: "d'abord leur nature d'individus isolés, sporadiques, ensuite, leur qualité de milieu à l'égard d'autres êtres". Ideas are parasitic inhabitants of the human mind which, however, is not "la demeure exclusive de l'idée" other independent, sporadic existences living in the same medium are languages. "Relativement à l'esprit, la langue est un corps parasite, mais il n'est pas d'être qui ne mérite ce titre, à l'égard d'une formation quelconque, puisqu'il n'en est pas qui se passe d'un milieu et qui ne

²⁴ Compare with Introduction, page 10, the passage beginning with the words "Je ne trouve pas de difficulté."

²⁵ See *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, II, p. 547 (Edition of 1884). "Une société enveloppe ses nations comme le ciel enveloppe la terre, et ce ciel, que les exhalaisons des marais ou les jets de flammes du volcan n'atteignent pas, est encore, dans sa sérénité, l'image parfaite des sociétés que leur contenu ne saurait affecter de ses tressaillements, tandis qu'irrésistiblement, bien que d'une façon insensible, elles l'assouplissent à toutes leurs influences." Societies are here described as "milieux", but they, in turn, inhabit a racial milieu. "un milieu souverain où se meuvent des forces actives, des principes vivifiants en communication perpétuelle avec l'individu comme avec la masse" (page 545). On page 543 the author explains in what sense nations may be personified. "Un centre politique, autrement dit un peuple, a ses passions et son intelligence. Malgré la multiplicité des têtes qui le forment il possède une individualité mixte, résultant de la mise en commun de toutes les notions, de toutes les tendances, de toutes les idées, que la masse lui suggère. Bref, un peuple, pris collectivement, est, dans de nombreuses fonctions, un être aussi réel que si on le voyait condensé en un seul corps."

tire d'en dehors de lui-même sa nourriture et sa raison de subsister On ne saurait trouver dans cette vérité incontestable rien qui s'oppose à reconnaître l'individualité des êtres "

We have said that our author was seeking a permanent principle In order to be perceptible, reality must achieve duration Gobineau managed to accomplish this in the intellectual sphere by a concept borrowed from organic life In his view, the continued existence of "sporadic beings" of the spiritual realm was guaranteed by the coupling of homogeneous elements. In other words, ideas married and reproduced their kind. There is intimate correlation between the intellectual and the physical spheres: ". . on voit que les formes de l'existence abstraite, dont il a été question jusqu'ici, sont entièrement soumises aux lois principales observées dans la nature organique homogénéité fondamentale, *différences sexuelles*, besoin de milieux spéciaux, pluralité des milieux, diversité des espèces, infécondité des hybrides" (*Italics mine*).

Gobineau makes much of the infertility of hybrids· "Il ne suffit pas d'avoir constaté, dans les existences abstraites, la raison *déterminante* des genres, des espèces même, il importe de toucher du doigt que le caractère constitutif des genres et des espèces, le sceau de leur séparation, se montre lui-même ici dans la nature, c'est l'infécondité des hybrides Les efforts tentés jusqu'à présent pour effacer cette ligne de démarcation ont quelquefois démontré que les classifications étaient incorrectes; tout au plus, a-t-on été conduit à admettre, dans certains cas, que des individus appartenant à des espèces jadis très distinctes, s'étaient suffisamment rapprochés pour rendre désormais possible ce qui ne

l'avait pas été d'abord"²⁶ In the following, very interesting passage, the author not only gives us a theory of truth, but attempts a contribution to psychiatry. Gobineau's criterium for "trueness" or soundness of ideas is vitalistic and therefore invites comparison with the pragmatic test of Charles Peirce and William James. "En somme, l'infécondité des hybrides subsiste, comme le point le plus saillant et le plus reconnaissable du contact des espèces et elle se maintient à l'état de loi, démontrée dans le monde organique. Il en est de même dans le monde intellectuel. Un nombre de concepts, produits d'idées étrangères l'une à l'autre sont frappés d'une stérilité absolue. S'il en était autrement toute Idée serait ce qu'on appelle "Juste", car le signe d'une Idée qui n'est pas telle, c'est de s'arrêter court dans sa génération, au contraire plus deux Idées mises en contact se trouvent être homogènes et pourvues d'éléments susceptibles de se pénétrer et de se combiner, plus longue et plus vigoureuse est la lignée qui sort de ces premiers parents. Si l'on réfléchit à un grand nombre de situations mentales qui, ne résultant pas d'une lésion du cerveau, n'en sont pas moins telles que l'on est obligé d'y reconnaître l'aliénation dans une mesure quelconque, on reconnaîtra que le fait qui les signale, c'est le manque d'homogénéité, ou comme on dit, l'incohérence des Idées et, par suite leur infécondité."

Gobineau's standard for determining what is "true"

²⁶ See Ludwig Schemann *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, pages 384-385, for a discussion of the relationship of Gobineau's theories to those of Darwin. Although Gobineau rejected and combated the Darwinian theory of evolution, he discerned an analogy between his theory of the races and Darwin's theory of natural selection. In the opening paragraph of this *Memoire*, as well as in the second foreword to the *Essai*, he claimed to be, in a sense, a precursor of Darwin. Also his *Biography of Gobineau*, I, p. 444.

is interesting, whatever one may think of it and of the psychiatric theory from the standpoint of modern science. It has at least vitalism in common with Jamesian pragmatism. According to William James an idea was "true" when it worked, when it promoted life.

The citation which follows allows one to gain a conception of our author's cosmic perspective "La nature vivante se présente ainsi réunie en une masse immense, dont toutes les parties se pénètrent, soit au moyen de l'homogénéité des individus, qui, assurant la perpétuité des espèces fait circuler indéfiniment les modes de la substance, soit par l'enchaînement et la combinaison des milieux, en vertu desquels la vie se généralise "

Pluralism is, in spite of the monistic formulas, apparent throughout this treatise. So, for example, here in the sixth section of Part III " . . . la nature a une double constitution dont on doit tenir compte. Les différences qu'elle présente sont bien réelles, bien déterminées, qualitatives, immuables dans leur essence, ineffaçables. Cependant, la façon dont ces différences sont distribuées dans les manifestations de la substance, n'a pas un tel caractère et cela provient de la vie même qui pousse l'une vers l'autre, les affinités et pour cela les détache des parties antagonistiques. Au moyen de cette sélection perpétuelle, il y a mouvement général, plus ou moins contrarié, vers un équilibre qui ne se produit jamais complet et qui n'arrive pas à l'immobilité, parce que la vie ramène toujours les contacts antagonistes, et détache les affinités les unes des autres pour les reporter séparément vers des affinités plus grandes "

This sounds not unlike Jules de Gaultier who also saw life and reality as conditioned by constant strife.

To Gobineau it seemed that the phrase "*l'esprit est un milieu*" was lacking in accuracy and that it should be used with reservations "*La vérité est que les esprits sont des milieux*" " le corps solaire est assurément une sphère polarisée comme le corps terrestre, cependant les atmosphères de ces deux corps, sans parler de beaucoup d'autres de leurs qualités respectives, s'écartent considérablement d'une parité de type L'atmosphère particulière d'un esprit ne se distingue pas moins de celle d'un autre esprit C'est pourquoi la même espèce d'Idée n'apparaît pas indifféremment au sein de toutes les intelligences et pourquoi les autres Etres, dont nous allons avoir à parler tout à l'heure, ne sauraient non plus se produire partout sous le même aspect et avec les mêmes formes " By "les autres Etres" he means the different languages This last sentence is of the greatest importance for the comprehension of this philosophical work

Gobineau insists that ideas and languages, in short, all the entities manifesting themselves in "minds considered as milieux" are fully as much as other forms of existence subject to divergencies constituting genera, species and varieties. "Tel esprit est conformé d'une façon si spéciale que des entités intellectuelles fort rares à rencontrer ailleurs s'y plairont et y pourront multiplier, tel autre ne recevra que les variétés les plus vulgaires et il résistera à tous les efforts dirigées de manière à le rendre susceptible de rien recevoir au-delà " We have referred to the two solutions attempted by Gobineau for his main problem When dealing with the "sporadic, independent life" of abstract ideas, he had admitted the death of the individuals while the species endured. But

in the third part he employed a teleological fallacy to prove the immortality of the individual human soul

That this should have happened, is very natural since the human individuality had come to be his favorite concept, that in favor of which he had tended more and more to renounce even his concept of race. A few citations will make this development clearer. "Depuis les époques géologiques les contrastes extrêmes ont diminué, les petits se sont accrus ²⁷ Enormes mammifères, serpents démesurés, crustacés gigantesques, tout cela a disparu, avec la flore qui correspondait et pourtant les forces productives de pareilles individualités sont encore agissantes dans l'univers, seulement elles sont autrement réparties, autrement employées. Distribuées dans un ensemble plus vaste, numériquement parlant, elles opèrent dans un plus grand nombre d'êtres partagés en variétés, pour la plupart, moins tranchées et qui par ce motif, se rapprochant sans cesse, amènent constamment à la vie des variétés nouvelles qui se substituent à de plus anciennes, graduellement éliminées. L'homme est un spécimen appréciable du progrès de ce travail. D'abord, il était distribué en trois races, fortement caractérisées, cantonnées dans des situations géographiques très distinctes. Les premiers mélanges ont amené

²⁷ See also *Memoire* III, 2 "En effet, quand de l'être individuel on rebrousse chemin, vers le point de départ de cet être, les caractères du sporadisme s'atténuent à mesure qu'on avance et finissent par se perdre. Les hommes diffèrent plus entre eux que les enfants, les plantes arrivées à la floraison plus que leurs germinations premières. A leur tour, les enfants diffèrent plus que les embryons et quand on dépasse ces derniers pour ne plus considérer au-dessous d'eux que l'entozoaire spermatique, on trouve que là, la nature s'unifie si bien que le têtard qui doit devenir un homme et celui qui produira un poisson ne sont pas à distinguer l'un de l'autre. Ainsi, toute la création animée est ramenée facilement à l'identité dans la mesure où elle perd la conscience de la vie."

une série minterrompue et et incalculable d'autres mélanges. Les variétés sont devenues innombrables et le deviennent bien plus encore, à mesure qu'elles perdent de leur importance, et les choses iront ainsi jusqu'à ce moment, où les différences ethniques étant tout à fait effacées, il ne restera plus que les différences individuelles, lesquelles produiront la limite infranchissable où devra s'arrêter l'unification" This is a key-passage to the understanding of Count de Gobineau's personality and philosophy It forms the transition, so to speak, from the despairing pessimism of his work on the races to the individualism of *Les Pléiades*, the philosophical novel of his maturity A strong vital instinct bade him turn away from his concept of race, but, of course, he never gave it up completely He never saw either individuals or groups abstractly or detached from their racial composition ²⁸

Truths are indissoluble only to the extent of their human usefulness and this may be said to apply to "general truths" no less than to relative or particular truths It is evident that personal immortality was a "vital truth" to Gobineau. He insisted that human consciousness must be something more than "un aggrégat éternellement soluble, éternellement reproduit" " . l'apparition de la conscience, en donnant à l'Etre des raisons et des moyens de voir et de s'élever au-dessus des moyens mêmes qui l'ont produit ainsi que les autres manifestations de la substance, décide une nouveauté ."

Whatever one may think of Gobineau's use of these biological concepts in the abstract sphere, it must be

²⁸ See Schemann, Biography of Gobineau, Volume I, page 439. Discussion of Gobineau's racial theory and where the author's greatest merit lies

admitted that he succeeds rather well in accounting for both permanence and transience. It is interesting to compare his version with that of Jules de Gaultier as he gives it in *Le Bovarysme*. In this work occur the following passages "Ainsi, un état incessant de guerre et de contrariété conditionne l'existence du réel" ". une réalité quelconque est toujours entourée de réalités voisines avec lesquelles il lui faut compter, " " pour que le réel se forme et devienne perceptible une condition est nécessaire. c'est une certaine durée de l'état d'équilibre qui s'est établi entre les deux forces antagonistes." This necessary "element of duration" may become an obstacle and a menace to the life of the reality it has brought about "Toute réalisation est un choix et une restriction. Selon le principe de contradiction où l'on a montré la loi de toute chose vivante, une réalité ne parvient à se survivre en une suite de modifications d'elle-même que si elle nie à quelque moment et dans quelque mesure une part des éléments qui la composent. Quelque état de la substance phénoménale pour se réaliser doit durer, il faut donc qu'il se prête à une longue répétition de soi-même dans le temps; mais il faut aussi qu'il ne manque de rompre son immobilité, de se modifier quelque peu, avant que la durée, le pétrifiant dans toutes ses parties, n'ait supprimé en lui la possibilité de varier." ". . . Toute réalité vivante est soumise à la nécessité, — s'étant conçue de quelque façon afin de se former, — de se concevoir autre désormais et de se différencier quelque peu d'elle-même pour persister dans l'existence".

Gaultier finally quotes from Nietzsche's "Thus spake Zarathustra" "Qu'il faille que je sois lutte, devenir et but et contradiction des buts", tel est l'aveu secret que

murmure la vie à l'oreille attentive de Zarathoustra "29

Let us now return to the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle*. Ideas, according to Gobineau, are not indefinitely susceptible of development. We know already that he regarded the "milieu" as subject to dissolution. "Quand le milieu se dissout et change de façon d'être, ce qu'il contient doit nécessairement se séparer. l'ensemble se brise. Puis l'Idée, quand on l'examine en elle-même, ne se montre pas permanente dans la mesure de développement qu'elle a possédée d'abord. Elle grandit ou elle diminue; en avançant dans le temps, elle se modifie, un moment arrive où elle disparaît." "il est certain que les idées s'enchaînent et se succèdent avec plus ou moins de cohésion et, en se succédant, elles font disparaître leurs aînées et se substituent à elles. Leurs espèces, leurs variétés se retrouvent dans les milieux divers, mais non pas les individus. A l'observation des lois que nous avons rencontrées déjà, il faut ajouter encore celle-ci: les Idées meurent, donc elles ont vécu "30

The apparent persistence of ideas could lead one to be deceived. "L'attention des hommes s'attache avec respect et quelque crainte à un petit nombre de personnages chez lesquels on croit découvrir une grande persistance des Idées. C'est un titre de gloire et la

²⁹ Jules de Gaultier means by "le Bovarysme" man's faculty for conceiving himself different from what he is, but in his work of that title the idea is presented under two aspects: first the pathological one exemplified by Flaubert's heroine Madame Bovary "en tant que l'homme est impuissant à réaliser cette conception différente qu'il se forme de lui-même" and then to designate a much larger conception, the faculty of evolution itself.

³⁰ Compare with this Chapter I of the *Essai sur l'inégalité des Races Humaines*, where the author establishes the mortality of societies and civilizations.

raison s'en démêle aisément C'est que la persistance supporte la force, c'est à dire, la grande accumulation de la vie Dans cette préoccupation admirative on observe mal; il n'y a nullement pérennité des idées, mais il y a homogénéité plus complète qu'ailleurs et, par suite, fécondité abondante et maintien des générations successives sortant pleines de santé et d'action du concours des Idées principales Si le cerveau qu'on prétend vanter, était habité, de l'enfance à la vieillesse, par le même milieu intellectuel invariable, n'agréant que les mêmes entités, il y aurait suppression du mouvement, stagnation, et, autant que cela est possible, le contraire de la vie " There is a hint here of Gobineau's hostility to the Buddhistic Nirvana so pleasing to Schopenhauer It is unmistakable in more than one passage of this treatise So, for example, in the eighth section of the third part he warns against the "terme rencontré par plusieurs panthéismes asiatiques on trouverait la fusion absolue, infinie, sublime, immobile de la substance et, à force d'avoir tout rapporté à la seule intervention de la vie se cherchant elle-même, on tomberait au plus abstrait du néant" The attraction ("l'attrait" or "cette attraction foncière" as he calls it in another place) between matter and mind and between the different parts of matter is based on the fundamental homogeneity of substance, but is not to be identified with this nor considered "une énergie primaire" It is equivalent to life "l'attrait n'est pas cette homogénéité foncière de la substance, c'en est seulement le moyen Il ne résulte pas d'elle et sa source n'est pas difficile à reconnaître: il découle de la vie, c'est la vie elle-même, il cherche la vie, il veut la vie; il passe où il peut pour la trouver, il la sent partout et la rencontre sous quelque forme qu'elle soit."

The phenomenal diversity of life is to be maintained at all costs. The following quotation is from the twelfth section of Part III, of the *Mémoire*, the passage is one of the most important for the understanding of the work. "Dans un milieu, il faut distinguer trois parties. 1 Le caractère même du milieu, essentiellement soluble et transitoire, vu la présence d'éléments hétérogènes, concourant à différents buts. Il n'est pas de milieu constitué en vue d'une seule individualité. Tout milieu est propre à déterminer certaines combinaisons, mais non pas la somme des combinaisons possibles entre les éléments qu'il rallie, il cesse donc de se maintenir lorsque l'antagonisme devient plus fort en lui que l'harmonie. 2 On a, dès lors, à tenir compte des éléments hétérogènes existant dans tous les milieux et qui amènent la dissolution. — 3 On a enfin à considérer les éléments homogènes qui se cherchent et s'associent. — Du moment que cette dernière action a eu lieu, une individualité commence et elle va se développant, sous l'emploi des ressources de la substance, aussi longtemps qu'elle rencontre dans le milieu où elle a germé, des éléments analogues, congruants à elle-même, homogènes, non identiques, puisque nous avons déjà observé qu'il n'existe pas de corps vivant absolument simple. De là, croissance de l'individu, développement, détermination plus ou moins énergique. Un moment arrive où la limite de ce que le milieu peut donner est atteinte; le milieu s'étiole, l'individu souffre; l'enveloppe se dissout. La question est de savoir ce que devient ce qu'elle contient, si l'entité produite disparaît ou persiste et dans le dernier cas, comment et suivant quelles conditions nouvelles."

Before considering further Gobineau's argument for human immortality, let us turn to the philological por-

tion of the treatise We do not, of course, pretend to give an adequate analysis here of any part of the work. We are concerned only with those of its aspects which have a bearing on our main thesis .

In Part II, the author commences by dismissing the naive belief of the Ancients who held language to be man's invention "un des produits utiles de son industrie" The mind of man is not the begetter of language which merely lives in it as a medium The respective developments of intellect and language are not parallel. If, as Jacob Grimm maintains, language were "la résultante des forces intimes de l'esprit humain, opérant en dehors de toute conscience et se reproduisant elle-même dans une sorte de décalque phonétique, symbole des perceptions", then it would follow that languages of cultivated epochs would approach perfection more closely than those of barbarous times. Professor Schemann³¹ has pointed out that Gobineau quotes the German scholar rather inaccurately and that he very possibly did not read Grimm's work itself ³²

The decadence of languages was recognized by Grimm, who, however, duly estimated a factor neglected by the French theorist, namely the power of language to compensate for damage it had undergone. Another writer, E von Hartmann, seems closer to Gobineau than does Jacob Grimm In his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*,³³ which contains references to Gobineau, Hartmann argued that language could not have been arbitrarily created by the human intellect, but that it must be

³¹ Jacob Grimm *Über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Berlin, 1866, Sechste Auflage)

³² Ludwig Schemann, Biography of Gobineau, Volume II, page 54.

³³ Eduard von Hartmann *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten* (Zehnte Auflage, page 256, etc.).

the product of the unconscious mind, of mass-instinct Arthur Schopenhauer also opined that "the gradual degradation of languages" was a cogent argument against all the optimistic theories of progress³⁴

The latter part of the following citation from the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* is a little reminiscent of Jean Jacques Rousseau "Si le langage n'est qu'un décalque phonétique des opérations cérébrales, il doit être limité dans ce qu'il est à la somme de ces opérations On voit que ce n'est pas là ce qu'on observe Plus une langue est prise dans son état ancien ou dégagée de toute influence de perfectionnement, plus aussi elle est pourvue d'une opulence souvent fastueuse et, comme les langues des barbares sont généralement plus complètes et plus saines que celles des peuples arrivés à la civilisation, il faut conclure que l'esprit humain est resté et reste étranger au mode d'existence des phénomènes idiomatiques" Many critics have been tempted to juxtapose the names of Gobineau and Rousseau We discuss the question of their intellectual affinity in another chapter

The most beautiful linguistic epoch of the Greeks, argues our author, is that of the Iliad and Sanscrit is best represented by the Vedas Nevertheless, the savage destroyers of Troy were far less enlightened than the contemporaries of the Ptolemys and the simple shepherds of the plains of Arya-Varta were certainly inferior intellectually to the men living in the time of Vikramadytya. Now it is held by certain theorists, whom Gobineau wishes to assail, that modern languages fully make up for the loss in beauty, vivacity and vigour by extra-

³⁴ See Ludwig Schemann, Biography of Gobineau, Volume II, page 56.

ordinary clarity and precision Our author is not willing to concede this "l'appauvrissement constaté des vocabulaires ne saurait passer que difficilement pour un moyen de précision et de clarté On ne comprend pas comment une accumulation maladroite d'articles, de pronoms, de prépositions, d'adverbes, souvent entraînés conventionnellement hors de leur sens véritable, produirait la netteté du discours plus sûrement que l'emploi d'un mot unique, dont les rapports accidentels sont déterminés par des flexions et des affixes sans ambiguïté Pour ce qui est du verbe, cette partie si importante des langues ariennes comme des langues sémitiques, cet agent si nécessaire de leur mouvement, on ne peut prendre le change sur l'atrophie qui s'en empare" That language does not progress with the development of civilization he considers sufficiently well proven by the history of French alone. In the passage which follows, he attacks the logical word-order of modern French and in that he is only consistent with his vitalism "au douzième siècle, syntaxe, système des flexions, richesse lexicologique, tout était, sur ce terrain, ce qu'on ne le voit plus. Chez nous, désormais, la raideur de la période résulte de l'impuissance où sont les mots de se départir d'un certain ordre de préséance, sans compromettre le sens Le sujet ne se fait reconnaître comme tel que parce qu'il marche en tête de la phrase, le régime que parce qu'il se range à la queue, mais ni l'un ni l'autre ne possèdent plus de signes déterminatifs attachés à eux-mêmes. Que l'on ouvre cependant un de nos vieux auteurs, on y trouvera une liberté d'inversions, une indépendance d'allures, aussi entière que notre esclavage. C'est que le mot y possède des moyens propres à le faire reconnaître dans

son rôle et n'a nullement besoin de recourir à la ressource grossière de la position relative "

Another reason why Gobineau prefers the French language of the twelfth Century is the subsequent disappearance from the French vocabulary of many Germanic words

Any attempts made by scholars to regulate the growth and development of language are doomed to failure "Nulle époque ne s'est déclarée savante sans avoir prétendu à réagir sur les formes du langage Il est néanmoins à remarquer que les hardiesses ont toujours été d'une médiocrité singulière, qu'elles n'ont jamais effleuré l'essentiel et que, si modestes dans leurs prétentions, elles ont constamment failli On doit appeler en témoignage les révolutions du français depuis le seizième siècle " We cannot pursue the author's development of this theme in detail He reaches the following conclusion: " nous sommes placés aujourd'hui de façon à juger que la prétendue fiction de la langue n'était qu'une illusion et qu'en dehors de toutes les fantaisies littéraires, le français est devenu, devient et deviendra ce que l'intelligence humaine, si imposante qu'on la suppose, ne saurait ni prévoir ni régler."

Intelligence or mind is the medium in which language or the "individu idiomatique" lives, moves and has its being "La langue ne trouve pas un sol où s'implanter hors de l'esprit humain; cependant c'est un être à part. De même, l'acarus du chêne ne vivrait pas sur le saule, ni celui du saule sur le hêtre, néanmoins ce n'est pas l'arbre qui, donnant sans doute à l'animalcule les moyens de sa vie, en a créé le principe, ce principe est sporadique et étranger au milieu où il se développe." Thus

languages may, in Gobineau's opinion, be properly regarded as parasites. What he continually emphasizes is that they are individual, relatively independent beings and not the product of the human mind. .

The mind, the language and the human being are three connected entities that come into existence at the same time "En même temps que l'être humain vient au monde, l'esprit naît également, également naît le langage." Later on, as these three entities develop, it is seen that the worth of the language, its development and organization correspond to the nature of the race. The language is not modified while the race remains pure, but as soon as there is racial mixture the mind undergoes changes and there are simultaneously transformations in the idiom. Gobineau insists, nevertheless, that the latter does not stand in a relation of direct dependence to the mind ". . . la santé idiomatique n'a pas plus de rapports directs avec le raffinement de l'esprit que la santé du corps humain. Force vitale des langues, force vitale de l'être organique, force vitale du milieu intellectuel et des idées qui l'habitent, ce sont là trois objets de compréhension bien distincts, quoique se touchant et vivant l'un par l'autre"

Gobineau divides languages into three main varieties which correspond to the white, yellow and black races. Each of these linguistic varieties has its own peculiar temperament or "mode de mouvement". He designates these "familles idiomatiques" as "lourde", "emportée" or "agissante". "Aux races véhémentes appartient la rapidité du mouvement verbal; aux races phlegmatiques la pesanteur du substantif. La coordination et l'emploi mesuré des deux systèmes est l'apanage

de la variété blanche. On comprend que l'esprit n'a pas inventé ces trois modes d'organismes; ce n'est pas volontairement qu'il les maintient ou les altère." "Aucune nation blanche ne possède un moyen d'expression dont le mouvement soit exclusivement verbal. La nature de son génie s'y oppose, parce que la race ne le veut pas. Un groupe nègre ne donne pas au substantif un rôle prédominant, c'est la caractéristique finnoise. Mais quand une nation ariane se marie avec un groupe nègre, voit son intelligence se modifier au gré de cet hymen, sa langue originelle perd graduellement un certain nombre de ses traits et admet dans sa syntaxe, dans son lexique, dans sa phonologie, des portions plus ou moins considérables du parler mélanien." There is no language today but what is characterized by some admixture of principles foreign to its pristine state. "Plusieurs tiennent à la fois du mode agglutinatif et du mode moyen, celui des langues européennes; d'autres marient à ce dernier l'action verbale des Sémites. Plus celles que l'on examine sont le produit d'hymens nombreux, plus on y constate d'anomalies."

It seems evident to Gobineau that of the three linguistic families he has distinguished the Aryan may claim superiority, for in that group the excesses characteristic of the others are not found. "Le verbe, réduit dans sa force, laisse place au substantif, à son tour moins exigeant. L'agglutination est possible, mais limitée. Les participes exercent une action, mais les adjectifs également. Tout coexiste sans se gêner mutuellement et, au moyen d'une telle pondération, la syntaxe acquiert une opulence de forme inaccessible à la nature finnique comme à celle des groupes méridionaux. C'est assez marquer la supériorité." We quote one more passage to

show in what manner the author justifies his theory of linguistic temperament "Un indice très curieux met sur la voie de cette classification et la défend de l'accusation d'arbitraire les langues jaunes développent bien le temps présent, mais ne forment le passé et le futur qu'à l'aide d'auxiliaires Les langues noires et sémitiques n'ont du présent qu'une notion assez incertaine Ce temps se confond pour elles avec le futur qui, de son côté, par des aoristes à actions imminentes, se rapproche beaucoup du présent Le domaine arian possède le présent d'une façon tout à fait nette, non moins nettement il en distingue le futur et aussi le passé. Il en résulte que chez lui le mouvement est mieux réglé, plus sage, plus ferme."

Since, owing to racial fusion, languages have become equally "métissées", there is disorder everywhere. There is a loss in virtuality and a tendency to simplification and the use of artificial aids The deterioration established by the author may be put under three main headings The gradual impairment of the root system, which cannot be minimized, since it is the very framework of the structure, the loss of capacity for flexion, whether conjugation or declension, and the progressive atrophy of the verb

The ensemble of its roots constitutes the matter or substance of a language, but these are not all of the same nature or importance, they are destined to different uses. The "pronominal roots" are the direct agents or instruments of movement and are so called because they are more easily recognized in pronouns than elsewhere. This, however, does not mean that they belong to pronouns any more than to other parts of the language. "On vient de voir successivement les racines pronominales

employées à former les pronoms de toute espèce — les affixes verbaux et substantifs, tous les déterminatifs quelconques, prépositions, adverbess, particules Il y faut joindre sans nul doute, les interjections; j'ai cité les noms de nombre On aura lieu de s'apercevoir qu'un nombre considérable de racines proprement dites substantives et verbales, ne sont autre chose que des produits de cette classe, qui joue un rôle si prépondérant dans l'être idiomatique tout entier " Gobineau sees the pronominal system as a sort of "appareil nerveux" and considers it everywhere as the "essential instrument of life"

He insists that these "racines pronominales" are never, wherever they may be found, provided with any inherent signification which would render them unfit for their manifold functions A root may be considered an immobile "molécule idiomatique" possessing latent life It is neither substantive, verbal nor adjective until it has been determined and brought into motion by some "force primordiale" which brings out the agglutinative tendency, the sign that it is endowed with life and without which there might be isolated words but no language.

Just as there are no pronouns composed of a single root, all in fact resulting from agglutination, so every root is composite "Toute racine est donc un aggrégat, un milieu dans lequel le mouvement apporté par l'adjonction de l'affixe pronominal, trouve la vie déjà préparée à le recevoir et à s'en laisser impressionner"

The meaning of words is the tie that unites languages to the mind of man Agglutination indeed suggests life, "apporte . . avec elle, la notion plus ou moins claire de la vie", but nothing more The author refers the reader to the etymological studies of Dr Pott,³⁵ who

has demonstrated the arbitrariness with which a meaning may be attached to a certain root, then modified or again completely detached from it. So it is obviously this part of the "organisme idiomatique" which is affected by the human mind and shows all the varied influences of this, its environment.

There is a difference between the roots of the Semitic and the Aryan groups ". les langues sémitiques se sont tournées à concentrer une grande force dans la construction de la racine et c'est pour cela que celle-ci s'est énergiquement circonscrite; .³⁵ "Les racines Ariennes, beaucoup plus simples, touchant à moins de sens à la fois, sont plus disposées à laisser perdre ces sens, et à les remplacer par d'autres"

In a sense the mind may be said to stand to language in the relation of man to the animals he has domesticated. "L'esprit trouve en lui-même un être qu'il n'a pas fait, mais qui vit de lui, dont la substance est analogue à la sienne, sans lui être homogène complètement; il le domestique et s'en sert. Il l'assouplit à ses besoins, autant que cet être peut s'y plier. Il lui fait porter le joug, il le traite en un mot, comme nous faisons les différentes races d'animaux sur lesquels nous étendons notre action, sans pouvoir toutefois prétendre, ni à les avoir créés, ni à changer leurs caractères essentiels"

The author traces the loss in flexional capacity of nouns from Sanscrit down through Greek, Latin and

³⁵ August Friedrich Pott (1802-1887), German philologist. Author of *Etymologische Forschungen* (1834-1836)

³⁶ This is further amplified in other passages, for example here: "Si même, on considère les racines sémitiques, on est frappé de voir qu'elles possèdent plutôt la capacité d'atteindre à des significations qu'elles n'ont ces significations bien définitives en elles-mêmes et, la preuve en est, dans la façon très molle, très vague, bien souvent arbitraire, dont elles portent à des applications tout opposées."

Gothic to the modern languages whether Germanic, Celtic or Latin "Le Grec et le Gothique, plus purement Ariens, n'ont sauvé que cinq cas, le latin, influencé par le celtique finnisé en est resté à six Les dialectes Allemands, sous la conduite du Slave, ont gardé deux flexions (The Lithuanian and Slavic groups owe their retention of seven cases to their "alliances finniques") L'Anglais, plus germanique, a tout perdu et les langues du midi de l'Europe, sont désormais dans une pauvreté pareille "

Gobineau regrets the loss of dual number and the tendency of numerals to give up their concrete forms, as is instanced by the disappearance of the French forms septante, octante, nonante An analogous development is to be seen in the matter of gender. The neuter forms are disappearing in the romanic languages and Persian and English go so far as to suppress gender entirely This, in the author's view, is a blow to the very life of language "On ne perd pas de vue que toutes ces destructions, portant en définitive sur les affixes, sur les applications de l'élément pronominal, qui est l'agent de la vie idiomatique, c'est la vie même qui est ainsi graduellement atteinte "

The havoc among nouns is equaled by the deterioration of the verb. English, French, German and vernacular Arabic all show unmistakable signs of decadence in that respect "Ici plus de temps futur, là plus de temps passé. Presque partout le mode subjonctif disparaît, presque nulle part la voix passive n'a survécu Afin de déguiser du moins mal possible toutes ces ruines, force est de recourir à de laborieux échafaudages, les verbes auxiliaires; encore n'est-ce pas suffisant Les racines

verbales dépouillées de leurs désinences ou n'en conservant que des tronçons mutilés, doivent encore s'aider de pronoms pour établir le rapport à la personne et c'est ainsi qu'en allemand on arrive à construire des conditionnels composés de cinq mots, au lieu d'un seul, comment découvrir un mérite dans une telle complication ?"

Disintegration and loss of pronominal roots is no less noticeable in prepositions and adverbs. In order to ensure adequate means of movement language has recourse to all kinds of surrogates such as prefixes and suffixes.³⁷ The whole phenomenon could be compared to a "human body marked with scars and calluses."

Gobineau deplores the loss of quantity "La quantité et l'accent, opérant sur la phonologie, constituent . . l'enveloppe de l'individu idiomatique et, comme je l'ai dit, le tissu cellulaire qui l'enveloppe de toutes parts" Quantity corresponds to the horizontal and accent to the vertical³⁸ Accent, striking indifferently "syllables faibles" and "toniques", is the counterpoise of quantity. If one wishes to find "la quantité bien vivante," one should examine languages which have undergone little cultivation or mixture

Quantity is disappearing more and more and apparently in a ratio corresponding to the degree of culti-

³⁷ "Mais il arrive aussi par une conséquence très naturelle, que lorsque les mouvements verbaux et substantifs sont trop gâtés, toute la vie tend à se réfugier dans les particules qui, des lors, prenant un développement monstrueux, absorbent à peu près toutes les fonctions motrices de la langue. C'est l'exemple présenté, entre autres, par des groupes américains et finnois, où l'on trouve le *dajek*, le *Kiriri*, l'*aino*."

³⁸ The following embodies another argument for the unconscious derivation of language "Ce qui est digne de remarque, dans le Grec comme dans les langues jaunes, c'est que le classement des accents s'opère partout en prenant pour point de départ, la fin du mot et en remontant vers la tête. C'est une condition singulière, que la conscience intellectuelle de l'homme n'aurait jamais pu imaginer."

vation. This is greatly to be regretted. "Outre que la quantité redouble l'adhérence idiomatique, elle donne au langage une grande beauté. C'est sur elle que se fondait jadis l'expression poétique presque toute entière. Les premiers poèmes n'existent que par elle et par l'assonance qui en est une application." In section nine occurs this passage which explains more definitely the nature of quantity. "On y observe (in relatively pure and uncultivated languages) que les changements de valeur relative, dans les sons, ne résultent pas, primitivement, de la place occupée dans le mot par une syllabe, ainsi que le grec semble l'indiquer; qu'ils ne sont pas dûs davantage à la prédominance ou à l'infériorité des sons, comme l'allemand, mais qu'ils découlent de la puissance phonétique la plus grande d'un son à l'égard de ceux qui l'entourent. Telle syllabe est longue parce qu'elle nécessite l'effort de prononciation le plus marqué. Les autres sont brèves, après avoir été longues ailleurs, parce qu'elles sont tombées en contact avec un élément phonétique plus robuste qu'elles-mêmes, après avoir dominé ailleurs sur des sons plus faibles. La qualité de longues appartient, donc, excellemment aux toniques de la langue, c'est leur privilège. Quand le mélange ethnique s'opérant, les langues métissées ont apparu, l'équilibre de la règle a été troublé."³⁹

³⁹ "Un dialecte Arian, par exemple, s'unissant à un idiome nègre et le dominant, a maintenu dans le composé nouveau le droit de ses syllabes fortes, qui sont restées longues. Les syllabes fortes de l'idiome conjoint ont dû s'affaiblir pour que la quantité continuât de subsister. Puis, entre les sons faibles de l'Arian et les sons forts du Mélanien un rapport inverse s'est établi et, la nature des sons, désormais mariés, obéissant au besoin organique de s'harmoniser, tout a tendu à s'affaiblir pour atténuer les contrastes. Il en est résulté que la langue fille a été douée de principes beaucoup moins clairs et moins vigoureux que ses parents et dans la phonologie et dans la quantité."

It happens sometimes, owing to unusual circumstances, that the "idiome mixte" resulting from the combination of different races does not represent the true ethnic condition of the group. This is notably evidenced by the English language which ought to show more celtic and fewer Latin elements than is the case. One of the strangest phenomena is indeed the not infrequent transposition, as a consequence of which languages are used by racial groups for which they were not intended. In such transplanted "individus idiomatiques" there are always appreciable modifications just as one must expect from animal or vegetable species under such conditions. As particularly deterrent examples of this, the author cites the jargon of the Jews in Germany and Alsace and that of the negroes in Haiti.

The ideal condition for the linguistic individual is to live in his own proper medium or "milieu", the one for which he was made. "Ainsi donc, pour que l'individu idiomatique soit en santé, bien conformé, susceptible de jouir de la plénitude de ses facultés et de ses forces, il faut qu'il vive et se développe sur son propre terrain, c'est à dire, dans l'esprit d'un individu humain, appartenant à la race dont il représente lui-même, à sa façon, les aptitudes et les tendances." "L'individu idiomatique né et vivant au cerveau d'un homme du commun n'est jamais l'égal de l'autre individu idiomatique faisant partie des attributs d'une même race et annexé à un personnage supérieur." The author speaks, in this connection, of the great Dante. Gobineau never belied his fundamental aristocracy.

There is between language and the human mind a very intimate relation. "la première (la langue) cherche

et trouve dans le second (l'esprit), lui servant de milieu, un point de cohésion où s'attache le sens et qui influe sur tout l'exemple de sa vie. Ce point de cohésion est offert par la conscience que l'homme a de lui-même et qui embrasse la somme totale de ses expériences et de ses inductions sur tout ce qui lui est extérieur." Gobineau also develops further in this second Part his psychiatric observations and the possibility of morbid reactions between the mind and the "individu idiomatique." When the human organism is impaired by illness the mind must needs undergo changes and language is equally affected.

At the end of the third part the author argues for personal immortality. As a whole, this part of the work affords a good example of the Count's mysticism. At times, indeed, he impresses one as dangerously close to the "fusion absolue", the Buddhistic Nirvana which he was so definitely minded to avoid. In spite of himself he tended, at times, in that direction. One should also keep in mind that this *Mémoire* was completed rather near the time that Baron Seillière designated as the beginning of the ascetic period. "Plus un être est élevé sur l'échelle organique, plus il a d'accès à la connaissance et comme la connaissance est l'unique procédé de la susception de la substance par elle-même, l'être est visiblement appelé à la connaissance complète qui est l'embrassement de la substance."

The combinations of "milieux" are lost, though they continually reappear, but consciousness is something different. "Mais, la conscience, formée dans l'être interne, n'est pas une combinaison; c'est le fait d'une détermination positive de l'individualité, au sein de la

substance, et l'individualité y est ainsi à l'état de puissance " "Elle (la partie de la substance arrivée à un commencement de possession d'elle-même par l'apparition de la conscience) survit, parce qu'il n'y a rien qui dirigé vers un but, ne soit destiné à l'atteindre " The individual survives with consciousness

Our difficulty in conceiving the individual in his future existence proceeds from our natural habit of thinking of everything in terms of our present situation and we are led to ask ourselves "Where? When? How?" "Or, pour être au véritable point de vue de la question, il faut abandonner tout cet entourage Il faut s'en abstraire Pour l'être qui le quitte, il n'y a pas relativement à lui, de où ni de quand Emportant avec lui-même les irradiations de temps et d'espace, il les distribue ultérieurement suivant les nécessités du nouveau milieu où il entre On peut d'autant mieux concevoir cette indépendance que, déjà, à l'Idée on n'applique pas la double localisation dont il s'agit, même quand on rapporte une idée à une autre De même, dans l'observation des phénomènes idiomatiques, la sensation de où ni de quand ne se produit pas à l'esprit et, pourtant, il s'agit là de manifestations bien prononcées de la substance."

The author finally conceives the life of the individual in the beyond, where he is untrammelled and capable of great development, with extraordinary enthusiasm.

We turn in the next chapter to a consideration of the racial theory.

II — GOBINEAU'S RACIAL THEORY

The *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, which has been called an epic poem on the Aryan race, is an attempt to give scientific expression to an idea which to a greater or lesser extent pervades all the author's works. It is the idea that in the interpretation of history the factor of race is all-important. Gobineau was as obsessed with the formula of race as was Taine with the idea of the importance of the milieu. For him purity of race was the only sure mark of aristocracy. We get the key-note of his entire work in the preface to this *Essai* where he speaks of "ces jours de passion enfantine pour l'égalité". It is evident that here is a man in fundamental opposition to the spirit of his age. He was ever an aristocrat, attacking nothing more vigorously and persistently throughout his life than the notion that all men are equal.

It may be said that he is the intellectual descendant of Boulainvilliers¹ and of other French writers who have defended the Germanic cause. The introduction of Baron Seillière's *Gobineau et l'Aryanisme historique* contains an interesting study of the origins of Aryan imperialism. According to this author the theory of Aryan superiority owes its beginnings to the feudalism of certain political writers in the France of the eighteenth Century, was

¹ Gobineau did not accept the ideas of Count de Boulainvilliers without reservations, as may be seen from the following passage taken from an article entitled *Etude sur les Municipalités* (1848) of the *Revue Provinciale*, " . . ., on défigurait l'histoire, soit qu'avec Mably on préparât les faits pour l'usage de la logique démocratique, soit qu'avec le hautain Boulainvilliers on partageât résolument les Français en deux nations, dont l'une avait l'héritage de l'épée souveraine, l'autre celui des chaînes d'un éternel esclavage." Compare with pages 96 and 97 of this chapter.

strengthened by Germanic propaganda in the nineteenth Century, and wears its present aspect as the result of having donned an oriental garb. Nothing could show better than does the study of this theory to how great an extent philosophies of history have been the servants of human passions. Seillière gives an illuminating account of the different historical theories in France. The varieties correspond to the three main elements in the population, the Germanic (Frankish), the Celtic (Gallic) and the Latin. Gobineau belongs to the aristocratic tradition of the chiefly Germanic nobility and seems at times almost as uncompromising as the eighteenth Century writer Count de Boulainvilliers, who gloried in the recollection of the institution of feudalism.²

The underlying principle of this view of history is the inferiority and continued subjection of the Gallic (Celtic) population to the Germanic element the Franks who had conquered the country and become its masters. These latter alone were free and equal and there was an immense distance between them and the highest class

² The following quotation from the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* will show wherein Gobineau's conception differs from that of his predecessor. It is found in the fourth chapter of Vol II, (book 6), p. 433. "Il a déjà été établi précédemment que toute société se fonde sur trois classes primitives, représentant chacune une variété ethnique: la noblesse, image plus ou moins ressemblante de la race victorieuse, la bourgeoisie, composée de métis rapprochés de la grande race, le peuple, esclave, ou du moins fort déprimé, comme appartenant à une variété humaine inférieure, noire dans le sud, finnoise dans le nord. Ces notions radicales furent brouillées de très bonne heure. Bientôt on connut plus de trois catégories ethniques, partant, beaucoup plus de trois subdivisions sociales. Cependant l'esprit qui avait fondé cette organisation est toujours resté vivant, il l'est encore, il ne s'est jamais donné de démenti à lui-même, et il se montre aujourd'hui aussi sévèrement logique que jamais. Du moment que les supériorités ethniques disparaissent, cet esprit ne tolère pas longtemps l'existence des institutions faites pour elles et qui leur survivent. Il n'admet pas la fiction." See also pages 96 and 97 of this chapter.

of the 3rd estate.³ That there should have been attempts in theoretical writings to overcome and fuse these antagonistic views of the different classes of the population, is but natural. These theories are a reflection of the unifying process by means of which the once sharply divided racial elements gradually lost their identity and became merged in the French nation. More than anything else responsible for this was the increasing centralization and the power of the monarchy, which kept growing in importance due to its wise policy of protecting the municipalities and their liberties based on Roman law. The aristocracy, which was Germanic in origin, was bound to grow continually weaker although it had many an impassioned spokesman.⁴ The more pronounced national sentiment became (as a consequence of the wars of the Revolution and the Empire), the more hazardous and irreconcilable with patriotism was it for a French aristocrat to voice a protest. Gobineau had courage. As Seillière shows, Montlosier, who belonged to and defended the same aristocratic tradition and was an enthusiastic admirer of the feudal system, had been careful to minimize the importance of ethnic differences in the modern French nation. The lines of cleavage were political and economic, not "deux races" but "deux peuples".

Count de Gobineau, on the contrary, continuing on

³ See footnotes pages 86 and 87

⁴ But compare pages 96 and 97 and the two footnotes on pages 86 and 87 of this chapter. It was in the light of his own theory impossible for Gobineau to accept unreservedly Boulainvillier's doctrine of the conquest, according to which the French nation was supposed to be definitely and for all time divided into two different races, that of the victors and that of the vanquished. For further particulars see Ludwig Schemann's *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, pages 475-476, where there is a citation from a fragment of the preface to the projected second edition of *Ottar Jarl*.

the path trodden by French aristocrats of earlier times, adhered to the theory of the conquest and indeed this idea of a race of conquerors superimposed on a subject race became the fundamental concept of his famous *Essai* ⁴

The *Essai* tries to be scientific. Gobineau does in fact show erudition and makes great efforts to prove his assertions. But in spite of this the *Essai* is not a scientific work in the modern sense. Much of its material is made to provoke the scorn of professional historians and anthropologists of today. Numerous errors in natural science, history and philology could be pointed out, as well as the dogmatic character of the author's statements and the insufficiency of the proofs with which he tries to back them up.

The *Essai* reminds one of the writings of Montesquieu and of other works of the eighteenth Century when literature and science were not carefully separated. Not only is the style literary in its power, but the whole book is written with a strong personal bias. Gobineau is enamoured of his conception of the Aryan ⁵. To him the

⁵ The author of the article "Aryan" in the Encyclopedia Britannica (11th Edition) quotes the following passage from a book entitled *Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryas* (1888) by the orientalist and philologist Max Müller (1823-1900) "Aryas are those who speak Aryan languages, whatever their color, whatever their blood. In calling them Aryas we predicate nothing of them except that the grammar of their language is Aryan." Elsewhere in the same work Max Müller says. "To me an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar"

In scientific circles nowadays "Aryan" is a purely philological term. If the fact that Count de Gobineau gave to the term "Aryan" an ethnological sense occasion surprise, it would be well to remember the epoch in which the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* was written. Max Müller was an admirer of Count de Gobineau. See Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, Introduction, p. XXII and pp. 188-189

latter represents beauty, strength and dignity and he believes that he alone is capable of attaining to a high culture. It was, as we have said, Gobineau's nature to regard as Aryan everything that was noble and sympathetic in humanity.

It could be argued that even a poetic temperament like that of our author's may make a contribution to science. Such is the contention of Baron Ernest Seillière who considers the author of the *Essai* a man of extraordinary vision, who gave the world a very suggestive though bold philosophy of history. Recognizing the manifest lack of equilibrium Seillière draws attention to the "profusion d'aperçus originaux et de suggestions imprévues" and speaks of the "courage intellectuel" and of the "clairvoyance" of this "prophète aux inspirations irrésistibles". He feels that here is an "esprit singulièrement souple et fin mis au service d'une conviction trop exclusive".

There has been so much criticism of the work of Gobineau and of that of others who wrote works of a similar type, that I may perhaps be pardoned a slight digression which aims at defining the functions of different mental types. Whereas the poet or artist tends to deduce his particulars from a general or so-called intuitive conception, the scientist gives heed to details first and then derives his view of the whole from these after a careful verification. One usually attributes greater objectivity to the latter, but if it be true that there is no object without a subject, then it seems to me that neither scientist nor artist can claim absolute objectivity. The difference is one of emphasis and of method. It is apparent that science and art must lead to different views of reality, the relative values of which depend on view-

point and purpose. A confusion arises when an author deliberately clothes prose-poems like, for example, the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* and the *Histoire des Perses*, in a scientific garb. In doing this Gobineau reflected the tendency of his age, but it is probably not too much to claim, in the face of scientific scorn, that a mind like his is able to give valuable suggestions even in works of that kind.

One of the things to remember is that the author was comparatively young, not yet forty years of age, when the work was written. His views were modified later on when he travelled. Robert Dreyfus writes in his book on Gobineau: "Il est toujours tentant pour un cerveau jeune, habile aux jeux du raisonnement, exercé au sport des idées générales, d'élucider et de régenter tout par la logique et la magie d'une seule formule".⁶ Monsieur H. Muffang⁷ says that although critics of the work may be justified in tearing certain details to pieces, it is different with the ensemble, more than one of the author's essential and fundamental views having received an unforeseen verification.

The *Essai*, in which there is a clear exposition of Gobineau's philosophical and sociological convictions, is by many considered his masterpiece. Others, who are not disposed to take its scientific pretensions seriously, leave it entirely aside and, interested as they are, chiefly in Gobineau the artist, regard only the artistic works in which the theorist does not obtrude to an objectionable extent. At any rate, if one wishes to understand any phase of the author's work, some acquaintance with the

⁶ Robert Dreyfus *La Vie et les Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau*.

⁷ See the preface to H. Muffang's translation of Ammon's *Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre Grundlagen*, Paris, 1900.

fundamental thesis is presupposed, for the racial idea is a part of the man and appears almost everywhere in his writings. Let us pass then to an examination of the racial theory. We shall find that Gobineau is a pessimist. In the third chapter of Book 4 there occurs the trenchant phrase "l'homme l'animal méchant par excellence." There is a materialistic school of optimistic historians, who believe that humanity has continually progressed and that it is perfectible. The opposite of this conception is that held by a certain mystic school whose adherents believe that mankind has been degenerating ever since its existence on earth. Gobineau belongs to this latter class.

The ethnic question, according to Gobineau, dominates all other problems of history. The inequality of the races, which taken together form a nation, suffices to explain the destiny of peoples.

The three fundamental races are the white, the black and the yellow. The white race is best represented by the Aryan. This, in its pure state is dolicho-cephalic (long-skulled), tall and blue-eyed and is the only one capable of attaining to civilization. *It is the noble race. Its purest modern representatives are the descendants of the old Scandinavians, notably the Anglo-Saxons.*⁸ Leaving aside physical characteristics, the superiority of the Aryan race is due chiefly to a keener and at the same time finer sensibility of the will. This latter is complemented by that penetrating acuity of the intellect which alone makes possible its perfect exercise. Whereas the

⁸ In volume 2, page 485 of the *Essai* see the passage describing the Celtic and Slav elements of the German population.

Also on page 536, "La descendance anglo-saxonne."
Vol II, page 483 passage contrasting Anglo-Saxon and French conceptions of honour.

black race, which lies at the bottom of the scale, is characterised mainly by extreme ugliness and a strong sensuality, and the yellow race by a tendency to mediocrity in everything, the white race and the Aryan in particular is intelligent and physically beautiful. It has a decided taste for liberty coupled with an extraordinary instinct for order. Its perseverance is unparalleled. Aryans have a high regard for the dignity of woman and among them there is likely to be an exceptional development of family and clan life.⁹ The yellow race is practical and utilitarian above all. With its apathy and its proneness to mediocrity it constitutes an ideal element to put at the basis of a society. In distinction to it the white race attaches to the sense of utility a larger and more elevated significance. This applies especially to the Aryan branch. The yellow race could never alone create a society as it lacks the requisite energy.

Gobineau is chiefly interested in the task of explaining the fall of empires and the decay of civilisations. His test of the greatness of a people is its capacity to make a civilisation endure. He sets up the axiom that societies are mortal in the first chapter of Book I.¹⁰ "De même que personne ne doute de la condition universellement mortelle des hommes, parce que tous les hommes qui nous ont précédés sont morts, de même nous croyons fermement que les peuples ont des jours comptés, bien que plus nombreux; car aucun de ceux qui régnèrent avant nous ne poursuit à nos côtés sa carrière." This mortality of civilization and societies is attributed to one definite and universal cause. According

⁹ For Gobineau's idea of the distribution of the purest descendants of Aryans see *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, Vol. II, page 491-492.

¹⁰ Gobineau sees societies as biological organisms.

to Gobineau ethnic mixtures, marriages between diverse races, determine the progress or deterioration of societies. The latter are perpetuated according to the measure in which the white element has been maintained. As soon as this superior element disappears and ceases to act, then the civilization may be considered moribund and sooner or later it must yield to new social forms. *If a people could continue forever to be composed of the same elements it would never die*¹¹ At this point it would be well to hear Gobineau himself on this subject. How does he define the words "society", "civilization" and "degeneration"? We find a definition of society at the beginning of the second chapter: "Ce que j'entends par société, c'est une réunion, plus ou moins parfaite au point de vue politique, mais complète au point de vue social, d'hommes vivant sous la direction d'idées semblables et *avec des instincts identiques*."¹² He evidently considers ideas of less importance in a society than instincts. The latter must be identical whereas the ideas may be merely similar. The real cohesion is conditioned by a community of instincts. Again the ethnic factor. Also in his conception of the meaning of civilization. In chapter 8 the author opposes to Guizot's idea of civilization as a fact, his own that it is a state. "La civilisation n'est pas un fait, c'est une série, un enchaînement de faits plus ou moins logiquement unis les uns aux autres, et engendrés par un concours d'idées souvent assez multiples; idées et faits se fécondant sans cesse. . . . La civilisation n'est pas un fait, c'est un faisceau de faits et d'idées, c'est un état

¹¹ *Essays* Tome I, p. 32.

Essays I, pp. 451-452 (Longevity of India).

Essays I, p. 501 Chinese immutability versus Brahmanism

¹² *Italics mine*

dans lequel une société humaine se trouve placée, un milieu dans lequel elle a réussi à se mettre, qu'elle a créé, qui émane d'elle, et qui à son tour réagit sur elle. Cet état a un grand caractère de généralité qu'un fait ne possède jamais, il se prête à beaucoup de variations qu'un fait ne saurait pas subir sans disparaître, et, *entre autres, il est complètement indépendant des formes gouvernementales*,¹³ se développant aussi bien sous le despotisme que sous le régime de la liberté, et ne cessant pas même d'exister lorsque les commotions civiles modifient ou même transforment absolument les conditions de la vie politique."¹⁴ Gobineau, in the fourth chapter, discusses the question of degeneration and gives the term a more definite sense than has usually been applied to it. He demonstrates how common it has been to explain the decline of civilization by declaring that degeneration has set in. It is said that nations die when they are composed of degenerate elements. But what is a degenerate nation? A degenerate people is explained as one that is either fanatic or irreligious and being ill-governed and abusing its riches, has lost the virtues characteristic of its ancestors. According to this circular argument, a nation perishes under social scourges because it is degenerate and it is degenerate because it is perishing. Gobineau admits that nations may die because they no longer have as much vigour as their ancestors with which to resist the dangers of life, but feels that the word "dégénéré" requires a better definition. "Je pense donc

¹³ Italics mine.

¹⁴ The following definition of civilization is given in Book I, Chapter 9, page 90. "un état de stabilité relative, où des multitudes s'efforcent de chercher pacifiquement la satisfaction de leurs besoins, et raffinent leur intelligence et leurs mœurs"

que le mot dégénéré, s'appliquant à un peuple, doit signifier et signifie que ce peuple n'a plus la valeur intrinsèque qu'autrefois il possédait, parce qu'il n'a plus dans ses veines le même sang, dont les alliages successifs ont graduellement modifié la valeur; autrement dit, qu'avec le même nom, il n'a pas conservé la même race que ses fondateurs. Il mourra définitivement, et sa civilisation avec lui, le jour où l'élément ethnique primordial se trouvera tellement subdivisé et noyé dans les apports de races étrangères, que la virtualité de cet élément n'exercera désormais d'action suffisante."

Having established this, his main thesis, Gobineau tries to show that the things usually held responsible for the decay of civilizations would not in themselves be sufficient to account for it. In the second chapter of Book I he discusses the relatively small importance of fanaticism, luxury, immorality and irreligion and in the third chapter he argues that the relative merit of governments can not influence the longevity of peoples. This thesis he develops further in Chapter 5. Ethnic inequalities are said never to be conditioned by a difference in institutions. "L'idée d'une inégalité native, originaire, tranchée et permanente entre les diverses races, est, dans le monde, une des opinions les plus anciennement répandues et adoptées, et, vu l'isolement primitif des tribus, des peuplades, et ce retirement vers elles-mêmes que toutes ont pratiqué à une époque plus ou moins lointaine, et d'où un grand nombre n'est jamais sorti, on n'a pas lieu d'en être étonné. A l'exception de ce qui s'est passé dans nos temps les plus modernes, cette notion a servi de base à presque toutes les théories gouvernementales. Pas de peuple, grand ou petit, qui n'ait débuté par en faire sa première maxime d'État. Le

système des castes, des noblesses, celui des aristocraties, tant qu'on les fonde sur les prérogatives de la naissance, n'ont pas d'autre origine. . . . Avec cette doctrine concordent la répulsion pour l'étranger et la supériorité que chaque nation s'adjuge à l'égard de ses voisines. Ce n'est qu'à mesure que les groupes se mêlent et se fusionnent, que, désormais agrandis, civilisés et se considérant sous un jour plus bienveillant par suite de l'utilité dont ils se sont les uns aux autres, l'on voit chez eux cette maxime absolue de l'inégalité, et d'abord de l'hostilité des races, battue en brèche et discutée. Puis, quand le plus grand nombre des citoyens de l'Etat sent couler dans ses veines un sang mélangé, ce plus grand nombre, transformant en vérité universelle et absolue ce qui n'est réel que pour lui, se sent appelé à affirmer que tous les hommes sont égaux. enfin, plus un peuple est composé d'éléments hétérogènes, plus il se complait à proclamer que les facultés les plus diverses sont possédées ou peuvent l'être au même degré par toutes les fractions de l'espèce humaine sans exclusion. Cette théorie, à peu près soutenable pour ce qui les concerne, les raisonneurs métis l'appliquent à l'ensemble des générations qui ont paru, paraissent et paraîtront sur la terre, et ils finissent un jour par résumer leurs sentiments en ces mots, qui, comme l'outre d'Eole, renferment tant de tempêtes: "Tous les hommes sont frères." One should remember that to Gobineau the different classes on which a society is founded, represent ethnic varieties. The nobility roughly corresponds to the victorious race, the bourgeoisie is composed of half-breeds related to it and the people of the lowest stratum, which is racially inferior, are either very degraded and servile or actually enslaved. Democratic doctrines and the "furor for equality" are results

of the excessive mixture of races; they are symptoms of decadence (See Footnote, page 87)

Gobineau goes on to elaborate his conviction that societies influence institutions. "Comme la nation est née avant la loi, la loi tient d'elle et porte son empreinte avant de lui donner la sienne Les modifications que le temps amène dans les institutions, en sont encore une bien grande preuve A mesure que les peuples se civilisent, s'agrandissent, deviennent plus puissants, leur sang se mélange et leurs instincts subissent des altérations graduelles. En prenant ainsi des aptitudes différentes, il leur devient impossible de s'accommoder des lois convenables pour leurs devanciers Aux générations nouvelles, les mœurs le sont également et les tendances de même et des modifications profondes ne tardent pas à suivre. On voit ces modifications devenir plus fréquentes et profondes à mesure que la race change davantage, tandis qu'elles restaient plus rares et plus graduées, tant que les populations elles-mêmes étaient plus proches parentes des premiers inspireurs En Angleterre, celui de tous les pays de l'Europe où les modifications du sang ont été les plus lentes et jusqu'ici les moins variées, on voit encore les institutions du 14e et du 15e siècle subsister dans les bases de l'édifice"¹⁵

It is important for us here to notice this admiring reference to England and the English constitution The permanence of institutions is what Gobineau respected and he measured a people's greatness by its ability to make its type of civilization last. The Anglo-Saxons always impressed him as the best modern representatives

¹⁵ Recent developments in England seem to confirm Gobineau's view

of the Aryans The British constitution must, in the eyes of Gobineau, remain for ever inimitable by peoples of different blood ¹⁶

We are shown in the passage just quoted that excessive mixture of races brings with it a corresponding intellectual confusion; it is the occasion for the cropping up of individualistic and revolutionary theories and leads finally to the disappearance of the nation that is thus corrupted First extreme agitation, then a morbid torpor and finally death Such is the fate of a society in which mixture has gone too far.¹⁷

Gobineau devotes one chapter to the thesis that the progress or stagnation of peoples is independent of their environment and another to showing that Christianity neither creates nor transforms the aptitude for civiliza-

¹⁶ See the *Essai*, Vol II, pages 467-469 for the passage describing the gradual deterioration through foreign immigration of the people of the United Kingdom Even the English system of laws shows its effect

¹⁷ Baron Ernest Seillière, in his *Le Comte de Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique* (page 197), quotes the following passage from Gobineau's *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (page 138)

"Rien ne saurait faire concevoir l'anarchie de pensée et d'opinion que les croisements incessants des théories les plus antipathiques engendrent en Asie, et cela tous les jours, ce sont des pensées, ce sont des opinions d'où rien d'heureusement pratique ne saurait sortir, et qui frappent l'observateur désintéressé d'une sorte d'étonnement voisin de l'admiration par leur hardiesse et par leur nombre, par leur fécondité et leur vitalité terrible Il est intéressant de voir s'augmenter sans cesse ou du moins se soutenir ce désordre, et l'on y prend un certain plaisir nerveux Dans certaines situations données où l'on peut soi-même compliquer le noeud qu'il cherchent à résoudre, il y a du plaisir à le faire . Il m'a paru qu'il y aurait un intérêt de curiosité, à fournir aux gens de l'Asie centrale quelque nouvelle pâture intellectuelle pour redoubler leur activité et produire de nouvelles combinaisons philosophiques, n'importe lesquelles J'ai donc procuré aux Persans le *Discours de la Méthode*"

This passage may serve to illustrate further Gobineau's philosophy and it gives one an interesting sidelight on his personality Baron Seillière exaggerates somewhat when he credits Gobineau with a "jouissance satanique ou baudelaire à égarer . . ."

tion This was at his epoch a courageous thing to say and elicited the admiration of Prosper Mérimée

Several chapters of the *Essai* are devoted to the question of the origin and permanence of ethnic differences. The arguments of the polygenists and the "unitaires" as to the origin of the different races are reviewed Gobineau recognizes the impossibility of arriving at any definite conclusion, but argues that whatever their origin the races are now quite and permanently separate. The different races of mankind are intellectually unequal and must remain so. In accord with this is the inequality of the different languages ¹⁸ Humanity is not indefinitely perfectible ("perfectible à l'infini") There was but one noble race, the Aryan, and this as a result of mixture with other races has greatly deteriorated and is destined to deteriorate still more

In Gobineau's distinction between the different races there is much of interest For example, in his chapter on civilization, he mentions two great fundamental instincts found in all human beings of whatever race. first the instinct to satisfy material needs and then what he calls "l'instinct de la vie morale." The difference between the degrees of intensity assumed by these instincts, permits one to distinguish between the different races of mankind In some peoples physical need seems to be by far the outstanding characteristic, whereas in others the contemplative tendency predominates. We have already referred to the fact that the author resorts to Hindu symbols. He places at the head of the materialistic, male category represented by "Pouroucha", the Chinese, while

¹⁸ See *Essai*, Vol II, pages 488-489 the disappearance of the Germanic elements in the German language due to racial mixture.

giving as the prototype of the other class, of the feminine or intellectual tendency or principle typified by "Prakriti", the Hindu ¹⁹

"A la suite des Chinois, il faudra inscrire la plupart des peuples de l'Italie ancienne, les premiers Romains de la république, les tribus germaniques Dans le camp contraire, je vois les nations de l'Egypte, celles de l'Assyrie Elles prennent place derrière les hommes de l'Hindoustan. En suivant le cours des siècles, on s'aperçoit que presque tous les peuples ont transformé leur civilisation par suite des oscillations des deux principes Les Chinois du nord, population d'abord presque absolument matérialiste, se sont alliés peu à peu à des tribus d'un autre sang, dans le Yunnan surtout, et ce mélange a rendu leur génie moins exclusivement utilitaire Si ce développement est resté stationnaire, ou du moins fort lent depuis des siècles, c'est que la masse des populations mâles dépassait de beaucoup le faible appoint de sang contraire qu'elles se sont partagé. Pour nos groupes européens, l'élément militaire qu'apportaient les meilleures des tribus germaniques s'est fortifié sans cesse dans le nord, par l'accession des Celtes et des Slaves Mais, à mesure que les peuples blancs sont descendus davantage vers le sud, les influences mâles se sont trouvées moins en force, se sont perdues dans un élément trop féminin (il faut faire quelques exceptions, comme, par exemple, pour le Piémont et le nord de l'Espagne), et cet élément féminin a triomphé Passons maintenant de l'autre côté Nous voyons les Hindous pourvus à un haut degré du sentiment des choses supérieures, et plus méditatifs qu'agissants Comme leurs plus anci-

¹⁹ *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, I, p. 84, II, p. 146.

ennes conquêtes les ont mis surtout en contact avec des races pourvues d'une organisation de même ordre, le principe mâle n'a pu se développer suffisamment La civilisation n'a pas pris dans ces milieux un essor utilitaire proportionné à ses succès de l'autre genre Au contraire, Rome antique, naturellement utilitaire, n'abonde dans le sens opposé que lorsqu'une fusion complète avec les Grecs, les Africains et les Orientaux, transforme sa première nature et lui crée un tempérament tout nouveau "20

It would take too long to go into the details of this conception here, but one quotation might be in order "Toute activité humaine, soit intellectuelle, soit morale, prend primitivement sa source dans l'un de ces deux courants, mâle ou femelle, et c'est seulement chez les races assez abondamment pourvues d'un de ces deux éléments, sans qu'aucun soit jamais complètement dépourvu de l'autre que l'état social peut parvenir à un degré satisfaisant de culture, et par conséquent de civilisation " In Gobineau's view, the Aryan is predominantly active or utilitarian and belongs to the male category, but compare p. 93 and Chapter I, pp 54 and 55

We must not forget one thing and that is that *in Gobineau's scheme racial mixture is in itself not condemned* Even the Aryan race can benefit by it and it is undoubtedly a factor in civilization. A singular idea of Gobineau's is that what we look upon as art is possible only by the marriage of black and white. The black strain furnishes the requisite passionate emotion but has not sufficient intelligence or restraint The latter is the contribution of the white race and in its noblest form that of the Aryan.

²⁰ *Essai*, Vol I, pages 87-88

From the Aryan standpoint, mixture with other racial strains should have been allowed only to a very limited extent! According to this breeding-stud philosophy (Alexis de Toqueville styled it "philosophie de haras"), the black and yellow races would have vegetated indefinitely but for the precious ferment supplied by the Aryan. Human history can be said to begin only with the appearance of this human type, the most beautiful, the most energetic and the best equipped for life, the only one possessed of creative genius. Also there can, in his view, be no doubt that the moribund civilization of Rome would have come to utter ruin but for the timely "Barbarian" invasions from the North in the fifth century of our era. The Goths, Vandals, Lombards, Burgundians and Franks were relatively pure Aryans who furnished the regenerating elements sadly needed at the time. The elaboration of this thesis is most interesting but we can not follow it further here.

History is viewed as entirely determined by this hereditary inequality of the races. It would require too much space to reproduce all the author's arguments here. The degree of importance he is willing to concede to environment or situation may be judged from the following passage ²¹

"Afin d'être aussi clair que possible, j'ajouterai cependant que ma pensée n'est pas de nier l'importance de la situation pour certaines villes, soit entrepôts, soit ports de mer, soit capitales. Les observations que l'on a faites, au sujet de Constantinople et d'Alexandrie notamment, sont incontestables (he refers the reader in a footnote to M. Saint-Marc Girardin, *Revue des Deux*

²¹ *Essai*, Vol I, page 60, (Chapter VI, "Dans le progrès ou la stagnation, les peuples sont indépendants des lieux qu'ils habitent.")

Mondes). Il est certain qu'il existe sur le globe différents points qu'on peut appeler les clefs du monde, et ainsi l'on conçoit que, dans le cas du percement de l'isthme du Panama, la puissance qui posséderait la ville encore à construire sur ce canal hypothétique aurait un grand rôle à jouer dans les affaires de l'univers. Mais ce rôle, une nation le joue bien, le joue mal, ou même ne le joue pas du tout, suivant ce qu'elle vaut."

Thus the final exhaustion of the priceless Aryan element will mean the end of the civilized world. The following passage taken from the beginning of the "Conclusion Générale" of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* seems to me to show better than any other the literary quality of that work

"L'histoire humaine est semblable à une toile immense. La terre est le métier sur lequel elle est tendue. Les siècles assemblés en sont les infatigables artisans. Ils ne naissent que pour saisir aussitôt la navette et la faire courir sur la trame; ils ne la posent que pour mourir. Ainsi, sous ces doigts affairés, va croissant d'ampleur le large tissu

"L'étoffe n'en revêt pas une seule couleur, elle ne se compose pas d'une unique matière. Bien loin que l'inspiration de la sombre Pallas en ait décidé les desseins, l'aspect en rappelle plutôt la méthode des artistes du Kachemyr. Les bigarrures les plus étranges et les enroulements les plus bizarres s'y compliquent sans cesse des caprices les plus inattendus, et ce n'est qu'à force de diversité et de richesse que, contrairement à toutes les lois du goût, cet ouvrage, incomparable en grandeur, devient également incomparable en beauté

"Les deux variétés inférieures de notre espèce, la race noire, la race jaune, sont le fond grossier, le coton et la laine, que les familles secondaires de la race blanche assouplissent en y mêlant leur soie, tandis que le groupe arian faisant circuler ses filets plus minces à travers les générations ennoblies, applique à leur surface, en éblouissant chef-d'oeuvre, ses arabesques d'argent et d'or."

Such a view of history is not without grandeur, but what a pessimistic philosophy! Degeneration can not be avoided, as a constant influx of Aryan blood is impossible. There were still relatively pure Aryans in sufficient numbers to save degenerate Europe in the fifth century, but this is not true at present. In fact the superior race, ever inferior in numbers and being continuously decimated by wars, will leave almost nothing of itself to show in the final hybrid, a uniform and very inferior product; one pictures straggling hordes of these, returned to primitive savagery, as the last inhabitants of the earth. It is a dark prospect!²²

What remains of Gobineau's theory now? Much has happened since his day. Archaeologists have brought to light much that was hitherto unknown of the history of the ancient peoples. Anthropology is no longer in its infancy and Biology has been born. According to Vacher de Lapouge²³ the essentials are not discredited and by these he means the following. The doctrine of the inequality of the human races, the tremendous importance of the racial factor, the extinction of the upper classes,

²² See *Essai*, Vol. II, pages 560-561

²³ *Dies Irae La fin du monde civilisé in Europe*, revue mensuelle, 1er Octobre, 1923. For a highly interesting discussion of this question and of other related topics I can not too warmly recommend this article by Lapouge.

the decline of the civilized world and the anticipation of its end. These, the essentials of Gobineau's doctrine, endure. It is impossible, in the compass of this work, to do more than give a concise account of this theory, anything beyond must be in the nature of suggestions. It is manifestly impossible to come to any definite conclusion as to the exact measure of truth contained in Gobineau's racial theory, but one should know something as to its present standing. Lapouge, though granting that the author was weak in Anthropology, believes that he showed remarkable penetration in his psychological characterization of the different races. As for the conclusion of the famous *Essai*, the modern critic feels that there is really no justification for such pessimism. For, says Lapouge, "the Mendelian laws leave no room whatever to the supposition of a monotype hybrid, the final product of all the races. The practical result of all the crossings is a limited number of forms in the hybrid population, animal, vegetable or human, with the reproduction of a number of typical individuals, calculable in advance. The original races never actually disappear since they are constantly reappearing in new subjects which are practically pure."²⁴ Only forces foreign to heredity such as the physical environment or social selection may modify the proportion by eliminating certain types or by multiplying certain others through unequal fertility. There is a tendency among scientists of our day to explain the

²⁴ It is to be remembered in this connection, however, that racial qualities are not inherited in a body but as individual characters, so that, while the fused population will contain many representatives with individual racial characters in pure form, the number of representatives with the complete equipment of qualities characteristic of the original race will be extremely small. For example, there will be many people having blue eyes in a pure form, but there will be few that have in addition all the other characters of the original race).

recession of the superior races by the more abundant reproduction of the inferior ones. After all, there is always at least the hope that eugenics may accomplish something. It is Gobineau's complete ignorance of the latter alone that can explain his despairing pessimism.

In our Introduction we traced, at least superficially, Gobineau's mental development and the gradual change in his conceptions. He may be said to have had something of the visionary in him since he was forever searching for the ideal: he could not live without the concept of an élite. Now, when he came to despair of extracting one from the ethnic ruins of modern times, there had to be some modification of his views. By means of a gradual shifting of emphasis which may be traced in his three works, the *Essai*, the *Histoire des Perses* and *Ottar Jarl*, an individual hierarchy was substituted for his original ethnic hierarchy. Despite all the author's pessimism, the way was left open for the individual. His ideal individuals, whom he calls "fils de roi", are depicted in his novel *Les Pléiades*, from which we quote in another chapter.

We can now understand his cult of energy which approximates him to Stendhal and which is known to have profoundly influenced the intellectual formation of Frederic Nietzsche. The pessimism of the *Essai* and especially the despairing fatalistic note of its conclusion would not have led us to expect such a development. It seems to me that the only explanation is the power of what Jules de Gaultier calls the "instinct vital."

It cannot be denied that there is some inconsistency, but it is certainly less serious than Gobineau's French biographer, Maurice Lange, would have us believe. In

spite of racial mixture and even admitting a consequent degeneration, it is conceivable that the essential traits of a race or of a family might survive in certain favored individuals²⁵.

With all the foregoing as a background one is prepared also for the characters to be encountered in Gobineau's fiction. Knowing him to be an idealist, with an aristocratic bias, one is led to expect characters of a peculiar sort. It may be argued, nevertheless, that while the author's mental disposition undoubtedly determined the human types he studied, it scarcely ever interfered with the justice of his observations.

In conclusion I should like to refer once more to one of our author's cardinal principles, since it is one that must commend itself to critics of modern democracies, namely his belief in the need for a social hierarchy. The variety of races²⁶ living together on the same soil makes for a diversity of opinions and leads to enormous intellectual contrasts. Conceding the benefits that may accompany this phenomenon Gobineau holds that when the élite of a people has attained to this moral liberty, there must be established a strong social hierarchy in order to safeguard its independence. Human prosperity requires the superposition in each country of

²⁵ Gobineau's method is, of course, more poetic than scientific. It is his romanticism that makes him personify such concepts as "family" and "race" and only in a poetic sense could he be justified in regarding the family as the perfection of the race. As an idealist he wishes the family to represent the perfection of the race, but he would never be able to prove his contention. (Gobineau is here always concerned with the Aryan race). This sort of romanticism is really in a harmless way much the same thing as our rather dangerous habit of personifying nations. We say, for instance, "Britannia rules the waves."

²⁶ See Gobineau's conception of racial souls, *Essai, II, Conclusion Générale*, pp 545-546 (Edition of 1884, Paris)

a race of conquerors and of a race of vanquished The corollary to this is his conviction that decadence sets in whenever these two elements, by commencing their fusion, lose their identity Democracy can be but a sign of decadence

One should compare with this idea the insistent demand on the part of defenders of our democratic institutions that sufficient changes be made to allow the government to be in the hands of an oligarchy of the intelligent

In the ensuing chapter Gobineau's vitalism is contrasted with that of Jean Jacques Rousseau We give important biographical data and consider the author's subjective view of History, his regionalism and traditionalism

III — A PERSONALITY IN THE MAKING.

ROUSSEAU, GOBINEAU AND BARRÈS

The German biographer of Count de Gobineau says of him that while the urge for independence was the fundamental impulse of his youth, this was gradually mitigated and tended to be kept more and more in check by the idea of order, "Der germanische Urheld der in dem Jungen sein Wesen trieb, kapitulierte vor der geheiligten Macht des Staates, vor den höheren Rechten der Gesellschaft"¹ However much truth there may be in this statement, it should not be taken too literally and the reader should not conclude from it that there was an orderly and consistent evolution in Gobineau's thought. Perhaps the most typical thing about Gobineau is his lack of consistency, is the fact that he could not possibly reconcile the various tendencies of his nature. He is, as we have said, interesting not only from a literary or intellectual point of view but as an historical personage, one of the prominent figures of the transition from the old to the new order.

His life inevitably presented a problem in adaptation which despite his very supple intelligence was to prove of overwhelming difficulty. Gobineau remained to the end an incorrigible idealist, he sought the ideal successively in the race, the nation, the family and the individual. This proclivity undoubtedly rendered his adjustment to the life of his day more difficult, yet it constitutes one of his chief claims to originality. Every age needs an ideal, however small may be the minority that is capable of approaching it. The Middle Ages could not

¹ Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineau* I, Book III, Chapter 2, p. 197

have done without the ideal of chivalry. Our author was one of the first thinkers to be seriously occupied with the problem of finding an ideal of conduct for the modern man. One can not protest too strongly against Edouard Schuré's statement that Gobineau was all his life the "paladin of one idea" (the racial idea). Though remaining true to the thesis established in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* he came, in his later years, by a shifting of emphasis, to center his interest more and more on the individual.

The interest aroused by his work at the present time must in some measure be due to the scepticism so many thinking people have developed toward democracy. There is, for instance, among a certain class in this country a growing impatience with the rule of mediocrity and an increasing resentment of the discouragement of individualism. Obviously our author's aristocratic scorn for the levellers was in his day a great hindrance to his popularity as a writer.

Gobineau's life might be described as one long and very dramatic struggle, for there was not only the difficulty of the adjustment of a proud aristocrat to a changed social order, but there were in addition numerous inner conflicts.² He was never able fully to reconcile his impetuous urge for independence and his love of liberty with his conservative trend, apparently equally pronounced, which made him recognize the need for order and the ascendancy of the state. Then there was the question of national allegiance at one time profoundly patriotic, his

² Salliere and others have treated the question of the complex heredity of this Gascon with Nordic atavism. See Elie Faure *Les Trois Gouttes de Sang*, Paris, 1930, and also *Europe, revue mensuelle*, Octobre 1923. *Gobineau et le problème des races*

convictions seem inexorably to have driven him into a sort of spiritual exile. But his love for France could not have completely died

In order to understand our author's mentality it is necessary to know more of his life during his formative years. The July Revolution of 1830 and the accession of Louis-Philippe dealt his legitimist family a severe blow. His father, Louis de Gobineau, lost his captaincy in the royal guard and all hope of a better future, since he was uncompromising in his convictions. The family, reduced almost to penury, withdrew to Lorient in Brittany. It was at about this time that his parents separated. After a sojourn at romantic Inzlingen in Baden with his mother and two years at a German lycée in Switzerland (at Bienne) young Arthur joined his father and sister Caroline in Lorient. It was here that he had his first romance. Amélie Laigneau played an important part in his life. She it was who inspired his first poems and it was of her he was thinking during those early years of struggle in the capital, when he was striving to rise and make a name for himself. This, however, was destined to be a hopeless love, since Madame Laigneau, who had other ambitions for her daughter, did not favor his suit.

Louis de Gobineau had a military career in view for his son and two years were spent at the Lycée of Lorient in preparation for St. Cyr; when Arthur, who apparently was not gifted in the exact sciences, failed to attain a satisfactory grade in mathematics, the plan was abandoned. Aside from his very definite literary bent, the young man had shown great interest and proficiency in History.

and in oriental studies. The Orient indeed, had captivated his imagination at an early age³

Finally, in the year 1835, it was decided for the young man to try his luck in the capital where his Uncle, Thibaut Joseph would be able to give him aid and advice. This relative was, in fact, an eccentric and not to be depended upon, although he would not have failed to do something for his nephew, if only for the honor of the name. Thibaut-Joseph was reserved and seldom approachable, he gave his nephew a small allowance and let him shift for himself. In secret he admired him from the start. As for Arthur, there can be no doubt that he had respect for the strength of character of this rather disgraceful old nobleman, much as he had cause to complain of him.

Fortunately, he had letters of introduction to prominent people in Paris. Poor as he was and humble as his beginnings had to be, he was from the start well-con-

³ After Count de Gobineau's death Amelie Laigneau (then the Baronne de St. Martin), who had always remained his friend, wrote the following description of him as she knew him in those early days " . Il etait deja un *Amadis* aux idees chevaleresques et une âme heroïque, rêvant aux plus grandes et aux plus nobles choses. C'était un grand jeune homme a la fois grave et naïf. Je me souviens qu'un Monsieur Gerono, un erudit de grande valeur, ancien precepteur des pages de Charles X, disait a ma mere "Je n'ai jamais rencontre autant de simplicité et d'intelligence dans une aussi jeune tête." Il travaillait cinq à six heures de suite, avec une ardeur toute benedictine. Il doit bien a lui seul sa grande elevation en toutes choses. Il versifiait deja a cette epoque avec une facilite merveilleuse. Toutes ses aspirations étaient tournées vers l'Orient. Il ne rêvait que mosques et minarets, se disait musulman prêt a faire son pelerinage a la Mecque. Il jurait par le prophete et se serait mis volontiers au regime du pilau et des confitures de pâte de roses. Il traduisait des ouvrages persans, ceux du poète Firdousi, je crous, dont il nous entretenait sans cesse. Dans ces travaux, son langage s'impregnait des couleurs et des images les plus poetiques. Il nous racontait des histoires merveilleuses, nous forçant a nous asseoir a la façon orientale pour l'ecouter. Au fond de tous ces enfantillages apparaissait déjà l'homme de génie." Quoted by Ludwig Schemann.

nected, especially in Legitimist Society and we find him frequenting the aristocratic salons of the Faubourg Saint Germain After holding a position in a gas-company ("Compagnie Française d'Eclairage par le Gaz, Société Larrieu, Brunton, Pilte, Pauwels et Cie") and later in the post-office (Administration des Postes, 2e sous-direction, Service des Correspondances, Bureau de la Correspondance intérieure) he was able to find journalistic work He became one of the staff of *l'Unité* in 1842. Besides he later contributed articles on political and economic subjects to *La Quotidienne*, essays of literary criticism to *La Revue Nouvelle* and stories in serial form to *Le Commerce* and the *Journal des Débats*

Among Gobineau's friends at this time were the Serres, the Rémusat, Alexis de Toqueville and the painters Germann Bohn and Ary and Henri Scheffer It appears that he saw his mother occasionally at the first, but that he was obliged to discontinue his relations with her owing to some breach on her part which he could not forgive That this, no less than his hopeless love, had its share in producing his pessimism and a precocious tendency to misanthropy, cannot be doubted

About the year 1840 Gobineau entered into an association with a group of ambitious young men, slightly older than himself, who apparently considered themselves an élite. Maxime du Camp tells of this in his *Souvenirs littéraires*.⁴ Un groupe de jeunes gens un peu plus âgés que nous, alertes, ambitieux, cherchant fortune et réunis entre eux par des idées et des habitudes communes, s'imaginant volontiers qu'ils formaient une société analogue aux Treize de Balzac, et rêvant de faire leur

⁴ (Paris, 1882 Tome I., pp 193 ss and 205 ss)

trouée dans la foule ” “ Ils étaient au nombre de huit, se laissaient côtoyer, restaient exclusifs, prêts à profiter de l'aide de l'autrui, mais se gardaient et n'ouvraient point leur intimité, ils se nommaient les “Cousins d'Isis ” Ce n'était là, pour ainsi dire, qu'une dénomination officielle, d'allure mystérieuse et singeant les frères de Sérapion, qu'avait présidés Hoffmann, en secret ils ne péchaient point par modestie et s'appelaient les “Scelti” — les Choisis — ceux qui sont au-dessus du vulgaire et qui, sur tout chemin, doivent marcher les premiers ” This seems to be, in embryo, the philosophical idea developed many years later in *Les Pléiades* The majority of the “Scelti” were of the aristocracy and had literary and artistic inclinations They were poor collectively and individually, but confident in their ability to rise Cassagne calls them “simples arrivistes” and speaks of them as a “group of young people who saw in literature but a means of arriving ”⁵ It is true that they were largely the product of a utilitarian epoch and that they had other ambitions than the cultivation of art for art's sake, but it would be a mistake to identify Gobineau with this bourgeois type with which one is familiar from Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* and from the character of René Mauperin of the Goncourts For in him the two types of youth under the July-Monarchy studied by Flaubert in *l'Education Sentimentale* are merged Not only did he resemble the character of Deslauriers in the relentless energy with which he pursued his ambition, but he also had something of the dreamy and sentimental Frédéric Moreau. Gobineau was romantic and idealistic as well as realistic and utilitarian and it would be difficult to say which of these tendencies prevailed. The term “simple arriviste” certainly does not fit him

⁵ Cassagne *L'Art pour l'Art*

The turning-point in our author's life came in the year 1848 when his friend Alexis de Toqueville, who had become minister of Foreign Affairs, made him his private secretary, from this position he was in the following year promoted so as to become chief of his cabinet

Gobineau had two years before, on September 10th, 1846, married Mademoiselle Clémence Monnerot who was of an old French family (of the province of Saintonge) which had been ruined by the Revolution. She was born in the island of Martinique whither her father, François Monnerot, had emigrated. This seems, for many years at least, to have been a happy union. In his brother in law, Jules Monnerot, and in the Baron d'Avril, also a relative by marriage, our author found warm friends and admirers. According to Ludwig Schemann they formed the first group of "gobinists"

Of all Gobineau's traits perhaps the most characteristic are his energy and love of independence and his admiration of these qualities. We know from a letter to his father of May 24th, 1841 that he had a great predilection for sixteenth Century Italy and its freebooters: "Je vais commencer . . . l'histoire des capitaines Italiens du 16e siècle. Il y aurait quelque chose de bon à faire à ce sujet. D'abord on aurait la plus belle couleur du monde à rendre et une agitation, une vie d'indépendance que je peindrais avec enthousiasme, car j'ai toujours raffolé des Condottieri. J'ai déjà marquée dans ma pensée Piccinino, Strozzi, Sforza, Trivulzio, Jean de Médicis etc. et surtout le trois fois illustre César de Valentino si calomnié de nos jours et des siens." And in another letter, dated June 1st, he writes: "Je suis

plongé dans les plus épineuses recherches pour faire leur histoire. Ce sera une sorte de grabuge où dans la biographie de chacun d'eux je glisserai toutes mes idées sur cette merveilleuse époque. Je fais l'*Alviane* en ce moment et j'y trouve tant de plaisir que cela me donne l'espoir d'arriver à faire de cet ouvrage une oeuvre d'art qui signifie quelque chose." This study of *Alviano* appeared in *l'Unité* in 1843. It is the forerunner of *La Renaissance*, the masterpiece of his later years.

There is a certain unity in the works of Gobineau's first literary period since they are all characterized by the same interest in the man of action, by the same admiration of energy. One finds this in the *Chronique rimée de Jean Chouan* and in the novel *Ternove* where nineteenth Century events are concerned, and in *l'Abbaye de Typhanes*, a romance of 12th Century France, no less than in *l'Alviane* and in the novels *Le Prisonnier Chanceux* and *Les Aventures de Nicolas Belavoir* which play in the sixteenth Century.

Gobineau's literary work is interesting from the fact of its being the product of a contemporary of such men as Balzac, Stendhal and Mérimée. With the latter two, especially, he challenges a comparison. Like Mérimée with whom he shared a fondness for depicting the primitive violence of bygone ages or of certain backward regions, he was interested in portraying the geographic type. Like Honoré de Balzac he depicted the society of that interesting period which saw the rise of the bourgeoisie and its growing importance after the industrial revolution. Like Balzac and Stendhal he was interested in the social type rather than the moral type as we know

it from the drama of Molière. In Gobineau's work we have a picture of that period drawn by an aristocrat. This would in itself make for an original point of view, but there is in addition this difference that while Balzac, who was under Lamarckian influence, believed in the all-importance of environment, our author continually stresses hereditary factors. Gobineau was indubitably influenced by Stendhal. An article in *Le Commerce* of January 14th, 1845 proves the high esteem in which he held him. He there compares *La Chartreuse de Parme* to Lesage's *Gil Blas* in that both aimed at depicting the state of a society and of an epoch. It is, in his opinion, one of the most remarkable novels of the time and, interestingly enough, he welcomes its liberal spirit, "Nous ressentons la joie de toucher une de ces oeuvres qui donnent tort de la manière la plus éclatante aux détracteurs du temps présent." Liberalism was in the air and even this conservative aristocrat had come to some extent under its sway. Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Lamennais and George Sand had become the apostles of a new era and even Chateaubriand had begun to show republican leanings.⁶

In spite of his legitimist convictions it did not take Gobineau long to learn to despise the men who in his time represented the *ancien régime*. There is a surprisingly liberal spirit in his article on *Capodistrias* (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 avril, 1841) and in a letter of the year 1848, addressed to his father in Redon, Brittany, he expresses the hope that the two political candidates for the district, of whom he has heard, may be "two honest republicans." But we must not let this deceive us. Gobi-

⁶ Gustave Lanson *La Défection de Chateaubriand*, *Revue de Paris*, 1er août, 1901.

neau's sympathy with the ideas of 1848 was shortlived. What he chiefly opposed was the tyranny of the state, but this did not make him a democrat, closer contact with the brutal realities of that revolution, with what he termed the "blouses sales", inevitably produced a reaction. He had always believed in communal and departmental liberties and his hatred of Parisian bureaucracy was of long standing. The fact of his having lived in Brittany during his boyhood was of great importance for his development: he came to appreciate the French provinces and to understand their viewpoint. Although the young journalist was not able to modify greatly the strong centralizing trend, his influence for regionalism did make itself felt. Gobineau was, however, not long subject to the illusions of democratic theorists, indeed the time came when, despairing of the French and of their capacity for freedom, he looked to a Bonaparte for salvation.⁷

Some of the articles written by him in this early period enable us to judge his mental attitude. Nothing could be more illuminating than what he writes about Alfred de Musset in *Le Commerce* (October 1844). Here is the scorn felt by a man of action for the "mal du siècle". "Si nous considérons la société actuelle, nous y voyons une activité, une soif du travail, une prédominance de l'ambition qui n'a rien de commun avec les rêveuses souffrances des inutiles qu'on s'est obstiné si longtemps à faire poser devant nous. La politique et l'industrie, et les arts et la littérature elle-même entraînent dans leur orbite la partie la plus notable des hommes de nos jours. . . . Loin d'admettre donc que

⁷ Very probably practical considerations had a share in deciding our author to rally to Napoleon's régime.

les méditations nuageuses soient de nos jours, nous prétendons qu'elles leur appartiennent moins qu'à tout autre temps, et non seulement nous avouons n'avoir jamais rencontré d'homme semblable à Octave, mais nous soutenons qu'il n'y en a point, et l'auteur des *Confessions d'un enfant du Siècle* a presque reconnu cette vérité aussi bien que tous les écrivains de son école, car l'objet principal de leur satire, c'est l'activité du monde au milieu duquel leurs créations se sentent dépayssées, et, à franchement parler, impossibles. Que peut valoir, en effet, à une époque laborieuse comme la nôtre, un idéal dont le dernier mot est l'impuissance, un personnage qui tire toute sa valeur de sa nullité, et dont le suprême mérite est de n'être propre à rien" This is clear enough! It is not difficult to understand this attitude when one remembers the young journalist's environment and how he had had to struggle. His varied contacts with reality during those early years in Paris could not but affect his character. This and the opportunities for observation afforded by his profession must partly account for his realistic power. Gobineau's work represents in great measure a reaction against the *lyrisme personnel* of the romantic writers of the first decades of the 19th Century.

Another interesting article from his pen, dating also from this early period, is one on the subject of royalism in which he attacks egotism. "Groupons les hommes parce qu'ils ont de commun encore dans les idées. Faisons une guerre à mort à l'esprit d'égoïsme" and he admonishes royalists to combat "l'action incessante de l'Individualisme, lèpre des temps modernes, principe de servitude dans le peuple et de despotisme dans le pouvoir." This, of course, is quite in keeping with the author's po-

litical sympathies. There are several ways of being individualistic and the reader, who has been told in a previous chapter that Gobineau stood for a strong individualism, should not consider the above quotation as a contradiction.

One of the most interesting phases of our author's work in these early years is that represented by his essays in literary criticism. The following two especially, "Des buts techniques de la littérature"⁸ and "Une nouvelle littérature est-elle possible"⁹ show very clearly the originality of his position. They appeared in the year 1845, at a time when imaginative literature was in a state of transition and groping. The romantic school was losing ground and yet the new spirit was hesitant and doubtful of its direction. One must take into account the profound economic changes that had taken place. The prosperity resulting from the unprecedented vigour of the industrial life, had produced a very materialistic spirit. Even the aristocracy tended to become absorbed by the wealthy and utilitarian bourgeoisie. Romantic literature in these years preceding the revolution of 1848, found itself in a curious position, being, as it was, not only utterly at variance with the prudent and practical spirit of the latter class which it impressed as dangerous and revolutionary, but equally incapable of appealing to the democrats who objected to its idealization of the past. To the progressive parties romantics appeared either as apologists of the catholic and mystic Middle Ages or as idle dreamers who neglected working for progress in favor of useless and egotistic lyric effusions. There now oc-

⁸ Nouvelle Revue, tome 4, pages 94-126.

⁹ Nouvelle Revue, tome 3, pages 101-139

curred, as Cassagne has shown,¹⁰ a double adaptation to the temper of the conservative middle classes on one side and to democratic aspirations on the other. There had to be an art to appeal to the bourgeois, but there was also what might be called "social art", the product of writers who voiced the sentiment of those who believed in progress and the perfectibility of man and who were trying to bring about a more ideal state of society. Between these schools and at about equal distance from either was the school of "Art for Art's sake" which Cassagne considers a modern form of romanticism.

Gobineau can not be identified with any school though varied influences may be traced in his writings. He considers the romantic literature of 1830 doomed since it has outlived its usefulness. He compares the achievement of the romantics to that of the Romans of the Empire. The French language was stopped short on the road to decadence and people came to realize the richness and the extraordinary possibilities of their tongue. Good sense and naturalness returned. But now a new spirit is necessary. The idle revery of the romantics, their grotesqueness and their aimless rambling are not for a reasonable people, a "peuple rieur" like the French. Romantic interpretation of History and notably that of the Middle Ages, is absurdly shallow, the true depiction of characters having been sacrificed to a superficial picturesqueness. Gobineau considered the "travail naïf" of the romantics "one of the maddest ideas ever conceived by the human mind". Gobineau condemns the personal lyricism cultivated by the preceding generation in favor of a "lyrisme objectif, collectif ou

¹⁰ Cassagne, *l'Art pour l'Art*

général" whose principal merits are to be clarity and general human interest. This is of all poetic forms the best adapted to a practical and positive epoch. The new literature, a product of an age of science and criticism, is to be realistic and hence averse to the marvellous in any form. "La terre, la terre seule, la terre que je prends des deux mains, enfantera désormais et nos terreurs, et notre espoir et notre joie." And in another place he says: "C'est en se montrant plus citoyen qu'homme isolé, plutôt père de famille que bohémien égoïste, en se faisant le peintre des passions et des actions d'autrui que le poète désormais surprendra agréablement le monde de ses lecteurs." This passage gives us a hint as to the difference between Gobineau and Stendhal: the latter could certainly be described as a "bohémien égoïste".

Our author counsels a return to antiquity, but he does not mean the antiquity exploited by the contemporaries of Louis XIV. The recent contributions of philological and other research and the social upheavals of modern times have given us a far better knowledge of life in those distant ages. Gobineau points to the writings of Paul Louis Courier and Joseph de Maistre as excellent examples of the intelligent utilization of ancient sources. By "return to antiquity" he means a renewed interest in man. "Les anciens apprennent à peindre, non les habits, mais le personnage, mais l'homme; et les aspects que présente la nature humaine sont inépuisables; nul poète, si grand soit-il, ne peut les envahir et les posséder à jamais . . . pour l'art l'homme ne cessera jamais d'être neuf et comme tel il est éternellement beau." In our study of the great book of Nature the ancients will be our best guides to beauty; their

writings are to be our "grammar and dictionary". We also know from these essays that he especially admired the realism of Ludovic Vitet whose *Scènes Historiques* later became the model for his Renaissance drama¹¹

Gobineau's position was original at this time in that he was neither a classic nor a romantic ("ni parmi les voltigeurs de Racine ni parmi les claqueurs d'Hernani" as he says) and that he had an intuition for the direction in which literature was going to evolve. In these articles he predicted realism and the hellenism of the Parnassians, he foresaw the future importance of the novel, of History and Philology and in the passage where he speaks of the "lyrisme général" he can be said to have foreseen what Victor Hugo was to do in *Les Châtiments*, *Les Poèmes Barbares* and *La Légende des Siècles*.¹² He saw glorious destinies reserved for French letters. It is interesting to observe the patriotic tone of these essays. Our author's vitalism becomes very apparent in his philosophy of History,¹³ although one cannot claim that he was consistent. It is interesting and instructive to compare with a certain passage in the fifth chapter of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*¹⁴ where the "inégalité native, originelle, tranchée et permanente entre les diverses races" and "la répulsion pour l'étranger et la supériorité que chaque nation s'adjuge à l'égard de ses voisines" are stressed, the following passages taken from an unpublished manuscript of Gobineau's last

¹¹ Ludovic Vitet *La Ligue, précédée des Etats d'Orléans Scènes Historiques*, 1826

¹² Gustave Charlier *Gobineau et le romantisme* (Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles, 29e année, no3 février, mars, avril 1924. See appendix, p 253. Comte de Gobineau *Etudes Critiques* (1844-1848), Simon Kra, Paris, 1927

¹³ See appendix, p 272 for Gobineau's view of the rôle of Cyrus

¹⁴ See Chapter II, pages 96 and 97 of the present work

years This seems to aim at defining "le sentiment historique" "Assez promptement les sociétés sont sorties de l'état élémentaire Les rapports de voisinage, la conquête, l'influence du fort sur le faible, de la race avide sur la race paresseuse, de l'intelligent sur le violent, de l'intolérant à croyances résolues sur le contemplatif à idées vagues, amena bientôt des fusions plus ou moins complètes ou du moins des pénétrations de peuple à peuple, et la circulation des hommes au milieu des autres A vrai dire, la science actuelle ne perçoit guère directement l'ancien état de l'humanité, celui qui est pour elle le plus ancien, que dans ce stage déjà avancé. . " " . ce n'est plus l'idée de la supériorité quand-même, ni même le désir du mieux-valoir, c'est essentiellement l'émotion de la curiosité et tous les écrivains du seizième siècle aiment mieux s'appesantir sur les particularités des mœurs jusqu'alors inconnues en Europe, que de s'amuser à des dédains dont ils ne se préoccupent plus A ce moment, il y eut comme une première floraison du véritable sentiment historique Dans cet attrait universel alors pour le savoir, aucune disposition troublante ne semblait exister et l'oeil embrassait nettement l'objet humain qu'il caressait On ne se demandait pas si l'homme était un Grec ou un Barbare, un citoyen romain ou un étranger, un chrétien ou un musulman ou un payen. On voyait la nécessité (certainement on ne la voyait pas encore d'une manière très distincte, on la voyait pourtant) de chercher dans les différentes nationalités, l'homme et on avait un goût très vif de se rendre compte du fait singulier de l'existence de ces différentes formes . ."15 In his intellectual mood

¹⁵ Quoted by Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, pages 454-456.

dans le néant" . . . "L'esprit étant petit n'embrasse guère; il croit prendre l'essentiel dans l'amas placé pêle mêle devant lui et dont il voudrait pourtant ne rien laisser perdre. Il regarde de son mieux, mais avec les yeux que la nature lui a faits, que son tempérament a troublé, que ses habitudes ont dérangés, que ses préventions ont obscurcis. Quoi qu'il en soit, et souvent sans le croire, il regarde avec une intention bien arrêté de voir telle chose et non telle autre, qui cependant est tout aussi bien devant lui " This he illustrates by Livy who saw only the grandeur of Rome, by Tacitus who was so impressed with the horrors of the imperial court that he could appreciate neither the merits of the Roman administration nor the general refinement in the manners and finally by Boulainvilliers, the spokesman of the Germanic nobility in France. One is reminded of Alfred de Vigny who said "Qu'est-ce que l'historien sans une idée décidée" and of Renan for whom history was "cette pauvre petite science conjecturale".

Gobineau did not, of course, deliberately falsify history and indeed he very frequently showed doubts and scruples In the *Essai* one is very conscious of the efforts he is constantly making to prevent what he calls "l'explosion de notre personnalité" There is in the *Histoire des Perses* a passage in which the author grants the possibility that the "progrès graduels de la science" may enable investigators to see things more clearly in some future day. In the manuscript from which we have quoted in this chapter there is more written in the same spirit. There is no doubt that he strove for historic truth and accuracy, and his salutary awareness of human limitations is a quality one misses in certain modern "scientific" writers It is customary in certain groups to attach

a rather narrow meaning to the idea of prejudice and one might argue that the refusal to recognize racial inequalities and the determination to attribute equal potentialities to all races of mankind is based on faith and partakes of the nature of prejudice

Gobineau's interpretation of History was impressionistic, a kind of symbolism. He defends his method in *l'Histoire des Perses* which appeared in 1869. The full title of this work is *Histoire des Perses, d'après les auteurs orientaux, grecs et latins, et particulièrement d'après les manuscrits orientaux inédits, les monuments figurés, les médailles, les pierres gravées, etc.* "Gobineau contented himself with relative truth " , l'histoire à laquelle je tends est beaucoup moins celle des faits, matière éternelle de soupçons, de réfutations et de discussions fondées, que celle de l'impression produite par ces faits sur l'esprit des hommes au milieu desquels ils se sont manifestés. Si je ne suis pas sûr, il s'en faut de tout, d'avoir trouvé et donné de tel événement, voire de telle bataille, le récit le plus authentique, je le suis du moins, et cela m'est bien autrement important, d'avoir reproduit l'image que le peuple de l'Iran a pensé être la sienne à ses différents âges. L'esprit occidental, en touchant ce portrait, le pourra juger d'un point de vue que la race qui l'a créé n'a pu connaître, et il résultera de cette nouvelle conception quelque chose de semblable à une statue de proportions en vérité assez grandes et assez nobles, bien que d'attitude peut-être un peu étrange, et qui méritera sans doute d'occuper une place dans un coin quelconque de l'arc triomphal de l'humanité "17

17 *Histoire des Perses*, Tome 2, I (L'Histoire iranienne et ses sources), quoted by Robert Dreyfus

In his use of legendary material he goes almost as far as Herodotus whom he defends enthusiastically "Il (Herodotus) avait la déduction courte, défaut commun des anciennes générations, mais ceci avoué, il a possédé cette qualité suprême, don des poètes et des philosophes, si rare chez les historiens, que rien de ce qui est humain ne l'a laissé froid."

As for our author's view of French History, it corresponds closely to that of Taine as expressed in his *Origines de la France Contemporaine*. According to this view, the course of French history is explained by the fatal tendency to centralization and the ever-increasing tyranny of the state, which smothered local autonomy and left less and less scope for individual initiative. The revolution of 1789 merely carried on the work of the absolute monarchy. Having irrevocably lost the old communal liberties, the French would, in Gobineau's opinion, never know freedom, for, under different régimes and with different names the same thing would continue to go on. It may surprise the reader to find the author reconciling a passion for liberty and independence with his reactionary political ideals, but it is, of course, this very regard for the rights of the individual that made him distrust majority-rule. Although he was, at least in later life, not absolutely opposed to the republican form of government¹⁸ he felt that monarchy was best suited to his country.¹⁹

There is an article written by Gobineau in this early period which could have been signed by Barrès, Bourget

¹⁹ He restricted the right to and aptitude for liberty to Aryans or peoples largely of Aryan blood

¹⁸ Gobineau *La Troisième République Française et ce qu'elle vaut* Chapters 5, 6, 15, 16

or Bordeaux It appeared in the *Revue Provinciale* which was founded by Gobineau and Louis de Kergorlay in the year 1848, with a view to promoting the cause of regionalism Our author understood the corrosive fascination exerted by Paris and other great centers Indeed he called himself "l'ennemi personnel des grandes villes" This article gives one an insight into his ideas. "Paris n'a pas de traditions . . . C'est que Paris, la ville de tout le monde, n'est la ville de personne; peu de ses habitants y ont reçu la naissance, dans tous les cas, les générations ne s'y établissent pas, ne s'y comptent pas." " . Il est donc tout simple que les hommes placés dans le dix-huitième siècle à la tête du mouvement intellectuel, gens qui avaient tous, à peu près au même degré, rompu avec les intérêts et les idées des provinces dont ils étaient originairement issus, se passionnassent plutôt pour des abstractions et des théories que leur présentait le bouillonnement des cerveaux en travail autour d'eux, que pour ces idées, ces notions, ces traditions multiples que les villes, les bourgs et les sillons de la vaste France recelaient mystérieusement dans le silence provincial Ainsi, les hommes appelés à guider le mouvement de '89, provinciaux de naissance pour la plupart, étaient Parisiens par habitude d'esprit, et n'avaient aucune de ces secrètes attaches qui ont rendu aux révolutionnaires de tous les autres pays, si difficile, si impossible même de se détacher du passé de leur nation et de s'élancer dans l'avenir en repoussant du pied les ossements de leurs ancêtres" For Gobineau the principle of progress was continuity. he could not approve the wisdom of a complete and abrupt break with tradition. The spectacle of his country, recklessly breaking with its past and trying

first this and then that governmental experiment, filled him with dismay.

Maurice Lange, in my estimation, makes too much of Gobineau's feudalism.²⁰ He did admire the feudal system of society, but his historical sense made him see the futility of an attempt to adapt the institutions of a former age to modern times. He did feel that the transition from the feudal to the administrative state could have taken place in his country, as it did in England, without a great revolution. His political ideal for modern times was a constitutional monarchy after the English model, but he realized that this was impossible of realization in France. He explained the political happenings in modern France by the fact that there had been a fusion of the races. In earlier times the element of the Frankish aristocracy had constituted a safeguard, but for a century the southern spirit, which he considered anarchistic and anti-social, had tended to predominate. This French "Midi" he considered to be far too fond of rhetoric. "Le talent de la parole, cette puissance en définitive grossière puisque ses oeuvres ne peuvent être

²⁰ Maurice Lange *Le Comte Arthur de Gobineau, Etude Biographique et Critique*. He saw, for instance, in the novel *l'Abbaye de Typhames* another proof of the Count's intransigent feudalism and hatred of democracy. "Avec quel evident parti-pris ne décrit-il pas les sentiments fiévreux des bourgeois en révolte et leurs atroces conversations et le bonheur des basses classes aux jours de l'insurrection." Baron Seillière credits Gobineau with impartiality in this work and correctly judges it to be a product of the youthful and liberal Gobineau. "lecteur encore docile de Thierry et de Guizot, admirateur de l'insurrection hellénique." As a matter of fact the novel was written at the time of his editorship of the *Revue Provinciale*, whose purpose was to combat centralization and to encourage provincial initiative. Safeguarding communal liberties was at that time apparently his greatest concern. Monsieur Lange's impression can be explained only by his strong bias. He never could forgive Count de Gobineau his lack of patriotism.

conservées qu'à la condition rigoureuse de passer dans une forme supérieure à celle où elles ont produit leurs effets, qui a pour but de séduire, d'entraîner, de tromper, beaucoup plus que de convaincre, ne saurait naître et vivre que *chez des peuples égrenés qui n'ont plus de volonté commune, de but défini*, et qui se tiennent, tant ils sont incertains de leurs voies, à la disposition du dernier qui parle" Aryan eloquence, on the contrary, is precise and clear and contents itself with remaining a rational exposition of the facts²¹ With such ideas as these it was, to say the least, difficult to be a model French citizen There is, nevertheless, very much in Gobineau's personality that reminds one of Maurice Barrès His individualism and the difficulties he experienced in seeking to reconcile his intense urge for independence with his respect for order, make one think of the vicissitudes in the mental development of the great nationalist leader It took considerable argumentation on the part of Barrès to convince people that there had been an orderly and consistent evolution in his thought from the *Trilogie du Moi* to the *Romans de l'Energie Nationale* Our author's evolution was different, to be sure, but this dissimilarity is one of degree The accentuation of the individualistic tendency in his later years was due to a variety of causes, among which poor health should be counted Maurice Barrès himself was a better Lorrainer than he was a Frenchman, although he would not have gone so far as our author who once said to an

²¹ *Essai*, II, Book VI, p 512 *Les Indigènes Américains*, quoted by Morland in *Pages Choissies* We have said that his belief in Aryan superiority and his idea of the peril of racial mixture led him to underestimate Greco-Latin antiquity and French civilization To Greece he accorded "One Century of Genius" and the Romans he designated as a chaos of peoples who were destined from the beginning to a shameful decadence

English visitor to Trie-Château "Je ne suis pas Français, je suis Beauvaisin" (From the diary of Mr Wilfrid Blunt, August 10th, 1871) As regards subjectivity Gobineau's work could be said to compare favorably with that of Barrès whose egotism was at times a handicap to him both aesthetically and intellectually ²²

It may be said that in Gobineau's work certain ideas which later became, so to speak, solidified, are still in a state of flux One need only think of Bourget's and Barrès' philosophy of the habitat Our author was fully as concerned with the problem of decadence as are his successors, the modern traditionalists

Gobineau and Barrès resemble each other in their thirst for knowledge, in their intense interest in ideas and in a common desire to understand and interpret all cultures. This was, moreover, in both cases accompanied by a certain scruple; both wished to maintain intact their respective personalities, their capacity for action and their usefulness as citizens Barrès' theory as the influence of the soil is, of course, almost the antithesis of our author's racial doctrine, but the *Cult of the Dead* seems a development of modes of feeling not entirely foreign to him Gobineau was as much of a traditionalist as Barrès. He, however, emphasized far more the importance of the physically inherited traits The two thinkers have a sort of vitalism in common Gobineau would have agreed with the following passage in *Un Homme Libre*: "Les individus, si parfaits qu'on les imagine, ne sont que des fragments du système plus

²² See E. R. Curtius "Maurice Barrès und die geistigen Grundlagen des französischen Nationalismus"

complet qu'est la race, fragment elle-même de Dieu"²³
 It is important, however, to be ever mindful of the marked difference between their respective philosophies. Gobineau was not a nationalist

One cannot insist too strongly on our author's social sense. It is very interesting to observe the respect he showed for military organizations, which are so obviously fatal to the individual's mental and physical freedom. This is a form of his vitalism which, as we have said, made him concern himself no less with the vitality of societies than with that of individuals. In the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (Volume 2, Book 5, page 29) there occurs the following passage: "En effet, la nécessité unique n'admet pour les armées qu'un seul mode d'organisation, le classement hiérarchique et l'obéissance. Dans quelque état d'anarchie ethnique que se trouve un corps social, dès qu'une armée existe, il faut sans biaiser lui laisser cette règle invariable. Pour ce qui concerne le reste de l'organisme politique, tout peut être en question. On y doutera de tout, on essaiera, raillera, conspuera tout, mais, quant à l'armée, elle restera isolée au milieu de l'Etat, peut-être mauvaise quant à son but principal, mais toujours plus énergique que son entourage, immobile, comme un peuple facticement homogène. Un jour elle sera la seule partie saine et agissante de la nation." ". . . l'armée était donc non seulement le dernier refuge, le dernier

²³ There is also much that seems "gobinistic" in the work of both Taine and Renan. It is possible, though not proven, that Taine was influenced by Gobineau in his *Origines de la France Contemporaine*. At any rate the influence on later French thinkers of that great work can not be overestimated. In the question of Renan's alleged plagiarism I am inclined to agree with what Maurice Lange says in his *Biography of Gobineau*.

appui, l'unique flambeau, l'âme de la société, c'était elle encore qui seule fournissait les guides suprêmes, et généralement les donnait bons. Par l'excellence du principe éternel sur lequel repose toute organisation militaire, principe qui n'est d'ailleurs que l'imitation imparfaite de cet ordre admirable, résultant de l'homogénéité des races, l'armée faisait tourner à l'avantage général le mérite de ses supériorités de premier rang, et contenait l'action des autres d'une manière encore profitable par l'influence de la hiérarchie et de la discipline." There is nothing more characteristic than this preoccupation with homogeneity or the insistence on the need for a hierarchy. The passage just quoted occurs in the chapter entitled *Rome Sémitique*. In another part of the *Essai* he refers to the fact that the spirit of independence of the Anglo-Saxons in America keeps them despite their warlike spirit from developing militarism. This spirit of independence is exactly what he most admired in Aryans. It is clear that he did not admire militarism as such, but that he recognized the value of military hierarchy for societies which excessive racial mixture had rendered unduly heterogeneous.²⁴ It is for the same reason that he was sympathetic toward the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. He had in the *Essai* denied that the Christian religion was a civilizing factor, environment could do no more than bring out what was already in potential form in the individual. The racial factor was everything. Gobineau came, however, to appreciate more and more the importance of the Church as a social organism. It

²⁴ Gobineau's attitude to war varies somewhat, but judging by some of the things he wrote after the Franco-Prussian War, it is not inconceivable that the present age would have found him a pacifist.

was also, in part, owing to his traditionalism that this thinker who was so definitely pagan in spirit, continued to call himself a "bon catholique". In the following passage of the *Fleur d'Or* the word religion is used by the author in the sense of the Church as an organism "La religion avait commencé par assouplir l'esprit germanique et lui donner des raisons de sociabilité Elle lui avait donné un modèle d'organisation en lui proposant les formes du Saint Empire, . "

Gobineau defended the Roman Catholic Church and its traditions despite his personal unbelief and this is the more remarkable since he was opposed to Christian humility and the ethics which favor the weak In my opinion he foreshadows a type of thinker whom we may expect to find in greater number, he resembles therein the agnostic Barrès and the fictionist Jules de Gaultier This is an instance of social vitalism, an agnostic or even an atheist of protestant tradition may manifest a similar spirit.

Gobineau's religion is complex He seems to have had a personal belief which he revealed only to intimates and which differed considerably from the profession of faith to be found in his writings His German biographer, Schemann, has studied the question of his religion with infinite pains and with real understanding Much is revealed in the correspondence between Gobineau and his sister Caroline who was a nun She was ever devoted to her brother and there was never an interruption in their friendship despite the extreme difference in their respective points of view Occasionally, however, in her attempts to convert him she would goad him to the point of impatience On the 15th of April, 1874

he wrote her "Je n'ai aucune espèce de tentation ni d'envie de m'adresser à Dieu, je dis au Dieu conçu à la manière chrétienne, plus qu'au Dieu conçu à la manière bouddhiste, plus qu'à Odin, plus qu'à Jupiter maximus optimus. Ce sont des genres de conception que je suis porté à croire toutes vraies, toutes fausses, suivant les temps, suivant les lieux." In this connection it is important to remember that for Gobineau, as he showed in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, religion mirrors race.²⁵ Gobineau's acceptance of the Christian religion in its Roman Catholic form was dictated by his social and historical sense. It was not his personal preference and it went against his instinct. In *Ottar Jarl* he says "Les Ariens ont une tendance naturelle à trouver le Dieu en eux-mêmes et à croire que ce qui leur sert est par cela même bien et sacré." "... Les notions chrétiennes venaient leur apprendre qu'ils n'étaient que peu de chose, chacun en son particulier, dans l'immensité d'une création, limitée de toutes parts sous la pression de l'infini de Dieu; Dieu cessait d'être la source directe de leur essence pour devenir leur créateur, comme il l'était de tout sans distinction. Admettre cette doctrine, c'était se soumettre à une grande déchéance. Ils s'étaient considérés jusqu'alors comme le point culminant de l'être; on les engageait à s'asseoir dans la cendre. Leur instinct s'y refusa longtemps." I am inclined to agree with the opinion of Ludwig Schemann expressed in the following passage of his *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*: "Gobineau hat sich, unter den gleichen Einflüssen und aus den gleichen Motiven, dem grossen Kompromiss persönlich, aber im Interesse der Allgemein-

²⁵ *Essai*, T. II, Livre V, chapitre III, p. 174.

heit, angeschlossen, das einstens das gesamte Germanentum mit dem Christentum eingegangen war " A passage in a letter to his wife, written in Rio de Janeiro and dated July 18th, 1869 is very significant He is commenting on a book of Renan's on St Paul "La morale est que si j'avais vécu dans ces temps-là, il est fort peu probable que j'eusse fait partie de l'Église Je ne comprends guère la chose qu'après Clovis " It is clear from more than one passage that Gobineau was not an atheist He had a very strong belief in personal immortality In one of the letters he wrote to his sister from Stockholm he argued that it was not enough to have "une religion pour la raison, pour le bon sens, pour l'entendement" He had said to the Baroness Akerhjelm "Pourquoi voulez-vous que votre imagination, votre sensibilité, votre coeur, à certains égards n'aient pas part à tout cela?" It is interesting to read what he says in regard to dogmas. In the *Religions et Philosophes dans l'Asie Centrale* occurs the following passage "Toutes les religions sont sujettes à donner naissance, en dehors d'elles-mêmes, sous l'action des imaginations grossières, à un certain nombre de dogmes qui entrent dans la croyance et ce qu'on peut appeler la théologie du bas-peuple, lequel, sans ces inepties, serait réduit souvent à ne pas avoir de croyances du tout, car il ne lui appartient pas, le plus ordinairement, de se hausser jusqu'à quelque chose de raisonnable " The author saw illusion as necessary to life He considered lack of faith a serious menace to the health of peoples Among Gobineau's reasons for defending the Catholic Church is undoubtedly his appreciation of its cultural accomplishments Schemann points out the interesting fact that in the author's polemics one

finds him saying "vous chrétiens" and "nous catholiques"!¹

An important date in Gobineau's life is the year 1854 when he was appointed chief secretary of the French legation for the mission to Teheran, Persia. That same year saw the publication of his famous *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, a truly herculean undertaking for one so young. Alexis de Toqueville had launched him on his diplomatic career and he had not been deterred by the Coup d'Etat of 1851. In fact he had accepted Napoleon with sincerity as a blessing for France. Except for a short period when he was at Hanover as chargé d'affaires, Gobineau had spent these years as first secretary of the French legation at Berne, Switzerland. He utilized the leisure he had at this post to write the *Essai*. It seems that he was given little of importance to do, he had made an enemy of his superior, M. de Reinhard. Gobineau did not like either Switzerland or the Swiss people. He detested the climate. It was to be expected that Gobineau, the arch-enemy of democracy, should disapprove of Swiss institutions. He grants and praises the "bon sens tenace de la race helvétique" which preserves the people from undue radicalism, but finds the country as a whole too prosaic for his taste. His letters to de Toqueville in which he describes conditions in Switzerland, are the result of careful study and resemble essays. One encounters such phrases as these. "Il n'y a pas de passions en Suisse" "La population rurale est toute-puissante en Suisse" "L'esprit cantonal est immortel en Suisse." "L'esprit joue peu de rôle en Suisse" "La vanité des Suisses est implacable et sans limites". "On n'est pas sanguinaire en Suisse."²⁶

²⁶ Quoted by L. Schemann.

Gobineau finds in the Swiss people an apathy concerning everything that has not to do with material gain. He appreciates such Patrician families as the Watterville, the Tavel and the von Erlachs but is disappointed to find that the real power is in the hands "de petites gens".

There is a remarkable similarity between our author's opinion of the Swiss people and that of Joseph Conrad, which appears in a number of interesting passages in his novel *Under Western Eyes*. Another modern author who assails Swiss respectability with eloquence is André Gide whose *Immoraliste*, though a psychological study of a pathological case, is even more pronouncedly vitalistic than the novels of either Conrad or Gobineau. "Honnête peuple suisse! Se porter bien ne lui vaut rien . . . sans crimes, sans histoire, sans littérature, sans arts . . . un robuste rosier, sans épines ni fleurs."

Our author felt far more at home at the Court of Hanover. He deeply regretted the necessity of returning to Bern. Thus on November 24th, 1851 he wrote: "Adieu le secrétaire intérim, les chambellans, les maréchaux de la cour! Adieu les tripotages de cour, les favorites, les favoris, l'opéra et les Excellences et les Altesses et les Majestés! De bons gros démocrates bien bêtes, bien plats quand ils ont besoin de vous, bien violents quand ils n'ont que faire. Je ne m'en cache pas: je pleure la corruption des cours. Je préfère l'odeur d'une boutique de parfumeur, toute écoeurante qu'elle peut être, à l'atmosphère dégoûtante du fumier démocratique, à la boue libérale . . ." This letter, needless to say, was not addressed to Alexis de Toqueville.

Finally, in February of the year 1855, after having for a short period represented France at the Germanic

Diet in Francfort, Gobineau set out with his family for Persia. At this time he had already more than one literary success to his credit. His psychological *nouvelle Mlle Irnois*, published in *Le National*, 'had met with popular favour. Also his novels *Ternove* and *l'Abbaye de Typhaines*. The *Essai*, however, was not to arouse the attention it merited, at least not at first.

This appointment to Teheran was like the fulfilment of a dream. The Orient had always had a great fascination for him and he gave himself up with the keenest delight to the enjoyment and study of that novel environment. His first sojourn in Persia²⁷ was perhaps the happiest period of his life. His ability to speak the language of the country was, of course, invaluable to him and he allowed no prejudices to interfere with his sensitiveness to impressions. He associated with natives of all classes and made friends especially among learned men. This contact with an Oriental civilization was indeed a broadening experience and a salutary one for the author of the learned work on the races. We owe some interesting books to this sojourn in Persia. Besides the

²⁷ The Count left for Persia with his wife, and his daughter Diane, aged 5, in February, 1855. He has described his journey, a difficult undertaking at that epoch, interestingly in *Trois Ans en Asie*. Owing to a serious illness of Diane, Madame de Gobineau and the daughter were unable to accompany him as far as Teheran but returned to Europe in 1856. Christine de Gobineau was born March 23d, 1857. In that same year the family acquired the Chateau de Trye near Gisors in Normandy where they were reunited on the Count's return from Persia in 1858. The author's father, Louis de Gobineau, died in that year. In 1866 Diane de Gobineau married Baron Guldencrone, Danish Naval Officer and aide de camp of His Majesty, King George I. of Greece. The Baroness Guldencrone, who was a woman of culture and the author of works on Church History, died in Rome, Italy recently. Madame Christine de Gobineau Serpeille, now a widow, lives in Paris with her family. Of her four children one son and one daughter are married. Monsieur Clément and Monsieur François Serpeille de Gobineau are journalists.

"*Religions et Philosophies* ." and "*Trois Ans en Asie*" and other works of a scientific character, there is a charming collection of short stories entitled *Nouvelles Asiatiques* of which there have recently been several English translations. This, the artistic reflection of his sojourn in the Orient, was written many years later.

Gobineau has been accused of living in the abstract, especially because of the systematic nature of his *Essai*. It should, however, be borne in mind that the author's theories were continually subject to correction by contact with reality, that he was a great traveller and a keen observer. He revised a number of his opinions in the course of time. It is significant that he came gradually to substitute an individual hierarchy for his original ethnic hierarchy. Gobineau's accounts of his travels and experiences in the East are realistic and differ markedly from the impressionism of, for instance, Pierre Loti. In *Europe* (1er octobre, 1923) there is an interesting parallel between Gobineau and Loti by Jean Richard Bloch entitled *Les Itinéraires parallèles. Gobineau et Loti en Perse*.

In the Introduction to the *Nouvelles Asiatiques* the author attacks a type of moralist whose rationalism arouses his ire. "Au nombre des non-valeurs que l'on doit aux moralistes, il n'en est pas de plus complète que cet axiome. L'homme est partout le même. Cet axiome va de pair avec la grande prétention de ces soi-disant penseurs, de réformer les torts de l'humanité, en faisant admettre à celle-ci leurs sages conseils. Ils ne se sont jamais demandés comment ils pourraient réussir à changer ce mécanisme humain qui crée, pousse, dirige, exalte les passions et détermine les torts et les vices,

cause unique en définitive de ce qui se produit dans l'âme et dans le corps Au rebours de ce qu'enseignent les moralistes, les hommes ne sont nulle part les mêmes On s'aperçoit sans peine qu'un Chinois possède deux bras et deux jambes, deux yeux et un nez comme un Hottentot ou un bourgeois de Paris, mais il n'est pas nécessaire de causer une heure avec chacun de ces êtres pour s'apercevoir et conclure qu'aucun lien intellectuel et moral n'existe entre eux, si ce n'est la conviction qu'il faut manger quand on a faim et dormir quand le sommeil presse Sur tous les autres sujets, la manière de colliger des idées, la nature de ces idées, l'accouplement de ces idées, leur éclosion, leur floraison, leurs couleurs, tout diffère" Elsewhere in this same Introduction he writes. "Je n'ai pas eu seulement pour but de présenter, après Morier, l'immoralité plus ou moins consciente des Asiatiques et l'esprit de mensonge qui est leur maître, je m'y suis attaché pourtant, mais cela ne me suffisait pas Il m'a paru à propos de ne pas laisser en oubli la bravoure des uns, l'esprit sincèrement romanesque des autres, la bonté native de ceux-ci, la probité foncière de ceux-là, chez tels, la passion patriotique poussée au dernier excès, chez tels, la générosité complète, le dévouement, l'affection; *chez tous, un laisser-aller incomparable et la tyrannie absolue du premier mouvement*, soit qu'il soit bon, soit aussi qu'il soit des pires" He came to Persia with the avowed intention of not allowing any preconceived ideas to influence him This approximates him to Henri Beyle (Stendhal) The orientals were to Gobineau what the Italians were to Stendhal.

The ending of the Introduction is of the greatest significance: "Peut-être aussi trouvera-t-on quelque

avantage à se rendre compte de ce que sont devenus aujourd'hui les premiers civilisateurs du monde, les premiers conquérants, les premiers savants, les premiers théologiens que la planète ait connus. Leur sénilité donnera probablement à réfléchir sur certains signes qui se produisent actuellement en Europe, et qui ne sont pas sans présenter des analogies avec la même décrépitude " It is clear that Gobineau the artist was accompanied by Gobineau the thinker. The racial theory was ever in the background and determined to some extent his observations.

As an artist he was charmed by the Orient and its people. His delight in observing these people's slavery to impulse, to the "premier mouvement", which is so comparable to the fondness of Stendhal for the impulsive southerner in Italy, is one form of vitalism. But on the other hand the Persians as a people impressed him as hopelessly degenerate. He expressed his opinion very clearly in his letters to de Toqueville. In the first place they were too mixed to have even the slightest race-prejudice. Thus he writes from Teheran on January 15th, 1856. "De race persane, il n'en existe pas plus, dans le sens scientifique du mot, qu'il n'y a de race française, et de toutes les nations de l'Europe, nous sommes assurément celle chez qui le type est le plus effacé. C'est même cet effacement-là que nous prenons, au physique comme au moral, pour notre type. De même chez les Persans " " . . Ces gens n'ont et ne peuvent avoir aucun préjugé de race. La démocratie est ici à son comble " He gives an unflattering interpretation of Persian politeness and regard for the proprieties: "La grande vertu, celle qui domine toutes les préoccupations des particuliers et de l'opinion publique, c'est le sentiment des convenances.

Etre un voleur, un débauché, un menteur insigne, voire un ivrogne, tout cela ce n'est rien ou se peut pardonner. Mais ce qu'on ne pardonne pas, c'est de manquer aux formes, et, dans le fait, il est extrêmement rare que personne y manque." This trait which one finds equally pronounced in China and in India and to a lesser extent in France, strikes the author as "un trait caractéristique de populations éternelles et chez lesquelles le sentiment viril a disparu."

In Persia the confusion of races and cultures and religious syncretism have led to a lamentable confusion of ideas and consequent disorder. They will never be able to achieve self-government, though under the protection of some strong power they will prosper: "Quand on permettra aux gens d'ici d'agir sous l'empire de lois définies et protectrices, ils se développeront dans le sens des intérêts matériels, tout comme nos populations. Ce qu'ils n'auront jamais, je crois, c'est un jugement très sûr, c'est une judiciaire très saine, c'est de la suite dans les idées. . . . En un mot, ce sont des gens d'esprit, des gens habiles à comprendre leur intérêt, dans le petit sens du mot, mais ce sont des gens irrémédiablement dégénérés"²⁸

²⁸ In another mood Gobineau showed a very sympathetic understanding of Oriental psychology. We quote from the conclusion of *Trois Ans en Asie*. It will be seen that what he says there, is not a contradiction of the conclusions he reached from the point of view of social vitalism. "Tout est en debris, tout est en ruines dans cette Asie. C'est a bon droit que les intelligences s'y occupent tant du passe et si peu de l'avenir. L'avenir est fini pour ces territoires. Ils ne pensent plus a vivre que sur ce qui fut. Mais c'est encore une perspective suffisante, puisque, je le repete, tout y a pris sa source. L'Asie a donc eu l'invention et se repose de cet immense infantement." What Asiatics have to their great detriment failed to develop is the critical use of the intellect which is the most remarkable Western achievement. "Nous savons classer, rapprocher, apprécier, juger comme jamais on ne l'a pu faire. A la vérité, il suffit d'une erreur d'une demi-ligne au départ pour

As for European domination of the Orient, it can, in the author's opinion, be only in a material sense "Sans doute, nous, Européens, nous les dominerons et ils se laisseront dominer Nous les dominerons, parce que nous avons plus de tenue dans le génie, bien autrement d'énergie dans la pensée et si nous sommes bien loin de valoir les populations blanches dont nous descendons par quelques côtés, nous avons assurément gardé plus de fixité dans nos volontés que les Orientaux " But in a spiritual sense such penetration can not be beneficial. "Ils prendront de nous ce qu'il leur conviendra de prendre et laisseront tout le reste, et si quelqu'une des deux parties imite l'autre, incontestablement pour moi, ce sera nous, nous descendrons jusqu'à eux sur tous les points où nous serons en contact Les Russes se sont-ils haussés au niveau des Allemands? Jamais, mais partout où ils l'ont pu, ils sont descendus au niveau des Grecs Une fois maître de la Perse, ils se régleront sur ce modèle et il en résultera un compromis qui sera, pour

que toutes nos conséquences soient fausses Aussi changeons-nous toutes nos conclusions à chaque période decennale, mais sans douter jamais de l'excellence de notre travail, ni de la supériorité universelle de notre méthode Nous avons raison. Il faut tenir à ses dieux, fussent-ils de bois Mais, avec ses avantages, ce dieu-là nous rend peu propres à comprendre que dans le tourbillon des idées les plus disparates il y a encore une grande force et une profondeur auxquelles nous n'atteignons pas, et que du mariage de l'inconséquence et de ces idées, il peut naître des résultats obscurs, sans doute, mais aussi d'une grandeur extraordinaire. Il me semble que la faculté de former et de rendre fécondes au moins des unions de cette sorte est le trait remarquable de l'esprit asiatique." The idea suggests itself here, and one is surprised not to find it expressed by the author, that the critical intelligence of the West may counteract the baneful effect of excessive racial and cultural confusion to a sufficient extent to preserve Western nations from the fate of the Orient Gobineau was by nature not optimistic, but it is clear from the tendency of his writings that he aimed at an intellectual aristocracy like the one urged by Renan Much evil could be averted if the power could be in the hands of an oligarchy of the intelligent

l'Européen soumis à ses effets, de la pure décadence” We do not quote the remainder of the passage in which he seeks to prove that European domination of the East will not be beneficial, in the long run, even economically

In the conclusion of his biographical and critical study of Count de Gobineau, Maurice Lange accuses him of being a veritable anarchist and of carrying to greater extremes than any other writer the individualism made fashionable by Rousseau. There have been other eulogists of the past and other literary egotists to extol the cult of the Self, but none of these were prevented from remaining French in spirit. Such statements require consideration. Lange is not the only critic who has compared Gobineau to Rousseau. Baron Seillière and others have likened the Count's idealization of the Aryan to Rousseau's conception of primitive man. It was pointed out in the first chapter that Gobineau acknowledged only the Aryans' aptitude for and right to liberty. This is an interesting comparison, but one can scarcely insist too strongly on the differences. The two writers unquestionably challenge a comparison notwithstanding the fact that their respective views of history present such a striking contrast. In his historical outlook Rousseau is the very antithesis of Gobineau. While Rousseau had a share in preparing the public for the revolution of 1789, Gobineau is prevented only by his realism from joining the champions of the Counter-Revolution. He had accepted the modern state and Christianity from a spirit of compromise dictated by his sense for History.²⁹

Our author has a tendency to idealize the primitive

²⁹ This is substantially the view of Prof. Schemann. See his *Gobineau, eine Biographie*, Strassburg, 1913.

Aryan and it cannot be denied that he defends a rationalized system in the *Essai*, but he was more realistic than Rousseau and not given to thinking of man in the abstract. Let us remember that it was Gobineau who called man "L'animal méchant par excellence" and that this included the Aryan. We refer the reader to the passage in the first chapter of the present work where we have given the theorist's characterization of the Aryan. We add here some further quotations to complete the picture. "Les blancs se distinguent encore par un amour singulier de la vie. Il paraît que, sachant mieux en user, ils lui attribuent plus de prix, ils la ménagent davantage, en eux-mêmes et dans les autres. Leur cruauté, quand elle s'exerce, a la conscience de ses excès, sentiment très problématique chez les noirs."³⁰ The following passage illustrates the author's realism. "Loin de découvrir dans les sociétés jeunes une supériorité de morale, je ne doute pas que les nations en vieillissant, et par conséquent en approchant de leur chute, ne présentent aux yeux du censeur un état beaucoup plus satisfaisant. Les usages s'adoucissent, les hommes s'accordent davantage, chacun trouve à vivre plus aisément, les droits réciproques ont eu le temps de se mieux définir et comprendre; si bien que les théories sur le juste et l'injuste ont acquis peu à peu un plus haut degré de délicatesse. Il serait difficile de démontrer qu'au temps où les Grecs ont jeté bas l'empire de Darius, comme l'époque où les Goths sont entrés dans Rome, il n'y avait pas à Athènes, à Babylone et dans la grande ville impériale beaucoup plus d'honnêtes gens qu'aux jours glorieux d'Harmodius, de Cyrus le Grand et de Publicola."

³⁰ *Essai* I, Livre I, chapitre XVI, p. 216

Gobineau, for all his idealization of the primitive Aryan and his liberty and sense of independence, was fundamentally realistic. Rousseau not only idealized man in the state of nature, but believed in the goodness of the man of people. He was a democrat and as such the very antithesis of the aristocratic Gobineau.

It is, however, interesting to observe that both writers were anti-intellectual and lovers of simplicity. We are confronted with the interesting fact that the distrust of urban civilization which characterized Rousseau, is almost equally pronounced in our author who differs from him so profoundly in other respects. We shall have occasion, especially in connection with *Akrivie Phrangopoulou*³¹ of the *Souvenirs de Voyage*, to think of Rousseau. There is a paradisiac quality to this story which brings to mind also Bernardin de Saint Pierre. This story relates the love of an English sea-captain of good family for an almost savage girl in Naxos, one of the Cyclades group of islands in the Greek archipelago. Gobineau shows in this story a strong predilection for simplicity and naturalness. One is here at the opposite pole from the modern feministic ideal. Like Maurice Barrès whose sentence "L'intelligence, cette petite chose à la surface de nous-mêmes" is renowned, he felt that the rôle of the intellect and the importance of knowledge have been overrated. The important thing is for people to be true to themselves.

"Les conditions d'existence réunies autour d'Akrivie étant exactement celles où se trouvaient les femmes d'il

³¹ The author in this story gives us the reminiscences of a delightful cruise he made on an English ship amid the picturesque Cyclades. The captain, who is introduced under the pseudonym of Henry Norton, was his personal friend.

y a trois mille ans isolement, affections limitées, ignorance absolue du monde extérieur, le résultat produit avait été pareil sur la fille de Naxos à ce qu'on avait pu le voir sur les tempéraments d'élite de ces temps reculés. Les qualités natives de la jeune fille n'avaient pas été supprimées, mais concentrées et, au lieu de s'épandre luxueusement en fibrilles multipliées, couvertes de feuilles, de fleurs, de fruits, elles avaient poussé droit en branches fortes sans noeuds, montant vers le ciel, ayant du charme mais encore plus de majesté, de la séduction, mais plus encore de grandeur." She was the woman of Homeric times who found her only reason for existence in her environment, who was daughter and sister exclusively until the time when she should in no less absolute a fashion become a wife and mother. The sophisticated Lydia in Mérimée's *nouvelle Colomba* would constitute a good foil.

Captain Norton was introduced to Akrivie in an unusual manner. "I suppose you have never seen anything to compare in beauty with my god-child, Akrivie?" inquired M. de Moncade as though he were stating an incontrovertible truth. The object of this remark smiled with conviction and without the slightest embarrassment. The captain was so dumbfounded by this palpable violation of good breeding that he bowed rather stiffly before replying to his interlocutor's satisfaction. "On ne saurait absolument répondre qu'il ne sentit pas surgir dans un coin de sa cervelle quelqu'une de ces vilaines méfiances dont les gens cultivés ont provision."

The young girl had received no education in the usual sense of that term and was in fact almost incredibly ignorant. Mr Norton had an opportunity to

become better acquainted with her on the occasion of a trip to the island of Santorin on which she and several members of her family accompanied him. The eruption of a volcano there afforded a beautiful natural spectacle. The captain, who loved Akrivie, studied her and all her reactions with the greatest interest. He had discovered that she knew nothing whatever and that she was quite innocent of anything worthy of the name of conversation. She seemed to have an idea that Spain was adjacent to America and that part of the world might "in all probability" be at considerable distance from Naxos. Her reading had apparently been confined to the prayer-book and what political notions she had were rather fantastic. She appeared to feel no little resentment against the Turks of whose morals she held a highly unflattering conception.

Meanwhile she smiled enchantingly and one could not but marvel at her eyes. The less Norton understood her the greater was her charm. He could not find her stupid. On the contrary "Des éclairs du jugement le plus droit, de la conviction la plus imperturbable et la plus absolue, une visible vigueur, une santé certaine dans cet esprit quasi-sauvage, lui donnèrent plus à penser que n'eussent pu faire les effusions les mieux fleuries, dont la meilleure part eût simplement, dans un esprit aussi raffiné que le sien, ravivé des souvenirs et remué des citations. L'entretien le promenait, non dans une plaine stérile mais sur une terre inculte, ce qui est fort différent pour celui qui cherche à se rendre compte des ressources d'un pays".

The conditions described in this nouvelle do not represent the author's ideal and his manifest enthus-

iasm should not be taken too seriously, since it is mainly the very natural effect such an experience would have on a sophisticated European aesthete. The artist must not be confused with the philosopher. There is the danger of making the author's meaning much narrower than it really is. *Akrivie Phrangopoulo* idealizes one type of womanhood and the character of Harriet Coxe in *Les Pléiades* idealizes another. Gobineau did recognize that the environment to which men and women are likely to be exposed in modern life, especially in cities, tends to make them lose some valuable qualities.

It is important for us to differentiate between the respective ideals of Gobineau and Rousseau. We are therein aided by the following passage in *Le Voyage à Terre-Neuve*: "Ce n'est pas le théâtre où ils agissent ni les intérêts qu'ils remuent qui font les hommes grands, c'est uniquement le poids de domination qu'ils savent faire peser sur les choses, et le pâtre qui sait vouloir est dans sa propre étroite sphère plus élevé qu'un potentat incertain de ses voies." This surely is different from the tranquil ideal of Rousseau. The anti-intellectualism of the two men was of a very different sort. To be sure, Gobineau like Rousseau placed life above knowledge, intuition above intellect. But the eighteenth Century philosopher was hostile to reason because men had by the use of it intensified the struggle for existence and enhanced natural inequality. This advocate of nature was forever devising schemes which should create an artificial equality. It should be remembered that Rousseau was a citizen of Geneva and, as a man of the people, not exempt from jealousy of privilege. Also, to be fair, one must

say that his teaching was in part simply the natural reaction of an earnest thinker against the injustice of social conditions under the Ancien Régime

Gobineau's quarrel with reason was because of its tendency to interfere unwarrantably with individualism. He believed inequality to be a law of nature. He did not object to reason because of its enhancement of the struggle for existence, for he believed in strenuous living and admired physical and intellectual superiority in almost equal degree. Loathing mediocrity as he did, his great concern was lest the superior fail to come to the top. A passage in *Le Voyage à Terre-Neuve* is psychologically very interesting and characteristic of our author. It occurs at the end of a laudatory description of certain sturdy and independent English fishermen: "Des individualités pareilles deviennent de plus en plus rares dans les temps modernes où le faible dominant possède et emploie tous les moyens d'écraser le fort au berceau."

Because of his individualism Rousseau must be said to belong to a certain extent in the vitalistic current. It is important, however, to appreciate fully the difference in their respective ideals. Gobineau reacted against modern society no less strongly than had the Eighteenth Century author against the artificial society of his day. But obviously his type of individualism made Gobineau a far more thorough-going vitalist than Rousseau.

In juridical and social questions Rousseau was a rationalist.³² One need only think of his *Social Contract*. It was as a rationalist that he was attacked by Burke and Savigny and the theorists of the Counter-

³² R. Berthelot "Un Romantisme Utilitaire", Tome III, Paris, 1922, (Wm. James)

revolution, by the social vitalists in short. He was romantic and vitalistic in religion and in literary matters. His life-work had a certain unity since it was entirely directed against the institutions, manners and morals of urban civilization, but in regard to his method it should be pointed out that in his vocabulary the word "nature" could mean reason or sentiment according to whether it was a question of natural right or natural religion.

Count de Gobineau seems close to Rousseau in his suspicion of urban civilization. The passage in the letter to Alexis de Toqueville in which Gobineau describes as "le dernier mot de ce qu'on appelle la civilisation" Persian politeness and regard for form which is insincere, is reminiscent of a sentence in Rousseau's *Discours sur les Arts et Sciences* where the author complains that moderns cultivated "toutes les apparences des vertus sans en avoir aucune." But the resemblance is a superficial one. Gobineau is in fact always thinking of the unfortunate effect of racial mixture, of its intellectual as well as its physical consequences.

As for M. Lange's criticism, it should now seem clear that the expression "anarchic individualism" can properly be applied neither to Rousseau nor to Gobineau. Rousseau the artist preached the moral independence of the individual, but in none of his writings do we find social anarchy advocated. And Gobineau's individualism was the reverse of anarchic. Whereas in Rousseau's writings the words primitiveness and nature tended to be abstract, Gobineau's individuals derived their value purely from the fact that they were true to their heredity and well rooted in their environment. For example, we are told not only about the "conditions d'existence" ac-

counting for Akrivie's personality, but we are also informed as to the origins of her family. Gobineau's characters are, to use a French word, well "encadrés." Saint Preux and Julie of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* may of course be considered to represent J. J. Rousseau himself with Mme d'Houdetot, but they are also in a sense simply fictions, as Gustave Lanson has observed "Mais c'est aussi une jeune fille et un jeune homme quelconque, ce sont moins des caractères que des états d'âme généraux"³³ These characters are in strong contrast with the personalities, so firmly set in reality, that one encounters in most of Gobineau's stories.

Count de Gobineau's first sojourn in Persia lasted three years. In 1858 we find him back in France on furlough. It was in this year that he lost his father, Louis de Gobineau. In this interim the diplomat was entrusted with a mission to New Foundland in connection with the vexing question of the fishery rights. We owe to this voyage the scintillating as well as informing *Voyage à Terre-Neuve* which is remarkable for its patriotic tone. Gobineau returned to Teheran in 1861 in the capacity of minister-plenipotentiary and remained two years. As his next post he would have preferred Constantinople for which his acquaintance with the Orient and Orientals so eminently fitted him, but was instead sent to Athens. Despite the opinions expressed in the *Essai* our author could not but succumb to the charms of Attica. Here was an environment favorable to creation and these four years in Greece did, in fact, prove to be a very fruitful period. It is here that he wrote the *Religions et Philosophies de l'Asie Centrale* and the *Histoire des Perses*.

³³ Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la Littérature Française*

He also published in 1869 a collection of poems entitled *Aphroessa*. As usual he studied with the keenest interest the environment in which he was placed and in addition to the *Souvenirs de Voyage*, which deal largely with the Greek archipelago, we have *Le Royaume des Hellènes* and other writings of a scientific nature where the results of his observations are recorded

The Count was far less content with his next appointment which sent him as French ambassador to the court of Dom Pedro II of Brazil. There was little in the way of intellectual stimulation in Rio de Janeiro and the luxuriance of the tropical vegetation aroused no enthusiasm in him, he disdainfully referred to those landscapes without a history as "paysages inédits". Besides he suffered greatly from the climate. His only consolation was a warm friendship with the emperor who was conversant with his writings and admired them. The *Souvenirs de Voyage* were published in 1872. *Le Mouchoir Rouge*, the first story in the collection which is very much in the manner of Mérimée, was written in Athens in 1868. *Akrivie Phrangopoulo* was completed in Rio in November, 1869, but we know that it had been commenced in the year 1867 when the author was still in Greece. It is impossible to determine exactly when *La Chasse au Caribou* was written, but the difference in viewpoint between it and *Le Voyage à Terre-Neuve* suggests a lapse of some years.

Ernest Seillière rather arbitrarily divides Gobineau's writings into those before and those subsequent to the Franco-Prussian war and designates the period after 1870 as the ascetic period. It should be noted that an ascetic tendency is already apparent in *Akrivie* which

was completed in 1869. The change in the tone of our author's writings was not so abrupt as Seillière's division would indicate. It is easy enough to explain this change as the cumulative effect of a series of disappointments, to which was added a breakdown in health occasioned by the Brazilian climate, the crisis of 1870 was but an aggravating factor. We shall speak more fully of his asceticism later. Countess de la Tour, the author of the preface to *Amadis* tells us that about the year 1870 Gobineau was beginning to age. "On pourrait dire qu'il commença de vieillir, mais il n'est pas question ici de cette vieillesse qui indique la prostration des forces physiques et la diminution des facultés. Nous voulons parler de celle qui nous détache peu à peu de toutes les illusions, de toutes les ambitions, qui amène l'esprit à la contemplation de la vérité pure, qui rajeunit le coeur en lui donnant cette gaîté, cet épanouissement de vie intérieure qui presque toujours est une conséquence du dédain de la vie extérieure et mondaine." In view of what one knows of Gobineau's life, this appreciation of the Countess de la Tour's seems rather too optimistic. At all events, the disenchantment of Norton, the hero of this story (*Akrivie Phrangopoulo*) is of some significance and may be regarded as a reflection of the author's own state of mind at the time. The change in Gobineau's disposition is, in my opinion, due to lowered vitality.

In *Akrivie Phrangopoulo* we have in an exotic setting the principal themes of the regionalistic novel. We find here the same interest in the family as the social unit and the same regard for tradition. The next story, *La Chasse au Caribou*, transfers us to a very different

atmosphere. It is interesting to compare this story, which plays in New Foundland with *Le Voyage à Terre-Neuve* Baron Seillière gives us an entertaining chapter on this subject in his study entitled *Gobineau et l'Aryanisme Historique* Unfortunately he does not always seem to be aware of the difference in genre of the two writings he is comparing The earlier work was more or less in the nature of a scientific treatise, while *La Chasse au Caribou* is clearly a piece of literature

This nouvelle is a dramatic study which portrays a young Parisian fresh from the boulevards coping with people of superior strength in unaccustomed surroundings This worldly-wise metropolitan, who has little to commend him but his refinement, appears at a great disadvantage among this sturdy race of rough, god-fearing people Seillière very aptly speaks of a sort of Gulliver lost in the land of Brobdignag

We have granted the difference in point of view of the two productions, but it would be more accurate to speak of a difference in emphasis In *Le Voyage à Terre-Neuve* there was along with admiration of Anglo-Saxon initiative a manifest repugnance for the narrow mercantile spirit of the people of New Foundland The Puritan atmosphere of the Truro Normal School excited his contempt because of the total neglect of the spiritual faculties and he naturally preferred to it the French methods of the Sacré Coeur of Halifax But this story, though less patriotic in tone, is quite conceivable without any appreciable modification of the opinions expressed in the earlier work. Nowhere do I see evidences of that fatuous Aryanism which Seillière seems to detect There is certainly nothing in the figure of the hero, Charles

Cabert that should wound a French patriot; that Parisian type has been held up to scorn by many a French writer since Gobineau's day³⁴ Besides the satire is not exclusively directed at him³⁵

The story is related in a tone of irrepressible gaiety not unlike the humorous tales of Edgar Allen Poe We can give space here only to a few quotations that have a bearing on our subject Young Cabert did not feel at ease among these people who were so lacking in refinement and thus despite the fact that he had been very well received and that everything conceivable had been done for him "Il était opprimé, et ce qui est sans doute la plus dure des conditions, il éprouvait l'instinct secret de sa faiblesse, honorable, flatteuse même, puisqu'elle provenait de la distinction exquise de sa nature, mais enfin de sa faiblesse, et partant de son infériorité vis-à-vis de ces natures brutales On peut imaginer que, dans les temps où les Barbares du Nord envahissaient l'Italie et, de gré ou de force, s'asseyaient dans toutes les chaises curules de l'Empire, les Romains élégants, qui réellement ne pouvaient pas prendre au sérieux des gens pareils, devaient éprouver des sentiments analogues à ceux ressentis par Cabert au milieu des hommes riches

³⁴ This spirit, which Gobineau is obviously given to attacking in his works, is what M Strowsky calls "l'esprit boulevardier", a phenomenon particularly of the Second Empire See Fortunat Strowski *Tableau de la Littérature Française au XIXe Siècle*, page 331

³⁵ Both *Le Voyage à Terre-Neuve* and its artistic sequel are of especial interest to Americans and the author's estimate of the different races which have emigrated to the New World, constitute a valuable supplement to the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* Gobineau greatly admired the character and spirit of enterprise of the Scandinavian colonists of the 13th Century and it is evident that he esteemed the later Anglo-Saxon and Norman French emigrations more highly than the heterogeneous masses which have come to us from Europe in recent years

de Saint-Jean " And in another place the author says the following "Le propre des gens vraiment civilisés et raffinés est de se soumettre à leur sort, les barbares seuls sont obstinés dans la résistance Charles passait sa vie, depuis son arrivée dans ces tristes parages, à constater des faits révoltants, mais en même temps la nécessité de les subir "

One day, when the conversation at table had turned to politics, Mr Barton asked his guest with what party he was affiliated. "Je vous avouerai", was the latter's reply, "que je n'ai pas beaucoup d'opinions *Je laisse ce luxe à ceux qui croient à quelque chose* En général je fuis les exagérations, et je me borne à souhaiter le progrès et le développement du bien-être matériel En somme, je penche pour les idées démocratiques mais je ne me lie qu'avec des hommes bien élevés " This profession of democracy was received with not a little scorn by his host The part of the young man's reply which I have put in italics, will aid the reader to recognize the class he is supposed to typify The passage is reminiscent of Villiers de l'Isle Adam

We can not tell the entire story here The love episode seems to have had a special purpose. Charles Cabert is made to appear as the type of city-bred person who has through his education come to the point of no longer being able to recognize purity and innocence This type appears on a far larger canvas in Paul Bourget's novel *Un Crime d'Amour* in the character of Armand de Querne, who is completely unable to recognize the true devotion of his mistress Hélène The situations are manifestly different, but the two figures nevertheless belong to the same type.

It is clear that there is a serious undertone to this story despite its exaggerations and its at times farcical tone. The nouvelle vividly contrasts two very different human types and again the author's sympathies are apparent. For all his superior knowledge this refined Parisian cuts a sorry figure beside the strength and homely simplicity of the New Foundlanders. In view of the mirthful quality of this tale it may seem far-fetched to speak of an anticipation of the regionalistic novel. Yet the principal themes which are to be found developed in stories of that genre, are all here. There is the same defense of the sanctity of the home and a like distrust of the cynical city dweller. In an article on Gobineau in *Le Nouveau Mercure* (Octobre, 1923) Pierre Dominique calls attention to the similarity in viewpoint between *La Chasse au Caribou* and Louis Hémon's regionalistic novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, which plays in French Canada. There is undoubtedly some truth in the judgment of Barbey d'Aurevilly who saw in Gobineau's creations chiefly the gropings of a moralist. "Il y a, si je ne me trompe, dans M. de Gobineau un La Bruyère enveloppé qui ne demande qu'à sortir avec armes et bagages, c'est à dire avec ses différences de style et d'originalité" (*Constitutionnel*, 18. mai, 1874). The reader should not conclude from this that these stories are primarily philosophical. On the contrary the author is concerned with telling a story. They can not be considered autobiographical nor even markedly subjective, although many a passage gives one hints as to the writer's preferences.

The author's anti-intellectualism and sentiment for healthy emotion are conspicuous in more than one passage in both *Akrivie Phrangopoulo* and *La Chasse au*

Caribou. His celebration of simplicity and strength of character foreshadow the novels of Henri Bordeaux. In fact the theme of the "fear of living" may be said to run throughout his entire work.

An interesting question is that of the relation of Gobineau to the French nationalists. Many of the ideas in Gobineau's theoretical works and many a theme in his stories are found developed and amplified in the different writings of that group. There can be no doubt that some of these authors were influenced directly by Gobineau. This is the clearest in the case of Paul Bourget who was for some time a member of the Gobineau society.

Here is another paradox. It is rather curious that the writer who was so severely reproached for his lack of patriotism by Maurice Lange, should have heralded the French nationalists. It must be granted that the connection is far from obvious in view of the cosmopolitan spirit of our author's later writings. In point of fact, only few in the present nationalist group would be willing to acknowledge the relationship. The antagonism to Gobineau of Charles Maurras, who exalts Greco-Latin civilization above everything else, is easy to comprehend. It does not, however, account for the fact that the name of Gobineau has found so little recognition among them as a group.

Robert Dreyfus treats of the matter in the sixth "Causerie" of a series of lectures which have appeared in book-form under the title of *La Vie et les Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau*. It appears that there is a very significant difference between Gobineau's view of History and that of his successors. The nationalists maintain a discreet silence, for, says Dreyfus. "Gobineau is

in a sense their unknown master, their ancestor But he is an ancestor who smiles pityingly on his descendants "

It will be recalled how fatalistic was Gobineau's *Essai*, which indeed ended on a note of despairing pessimism Decadence was there considered inevitable since racial mixture was a law of nature and could not be kept within bounds Centering his interest in the superior individual, this aristocrat tended more and more to take refuge in a haughty stoicism The theme of decadence in some form or another is almost ever-present in the writings of the traditionalists, many of whom seem to be haunted by the fear of it In view of the deep resentment which has been aroused by Count de Gobineau's criticism of his country, it is interesting that the title of one of the chapters of Maurice Barrès' famous novel should read *La France dissociée et décérébrée* ³⁶ He is not the only French writer to regard his country's condition as pathological It is the old familiar theme of the confusion and consequent weakness of a society which is unduly heterogeneous

It will be seen that Bourget is the better pupil of Gobineau in his emphasis on race ³⁷ Barrès recognizes the danger incident to the confusion of cultures, but stresses environmental factors. He has probably done more than any other modern French writer to promote the

³⁶ *Les Deracines*, chapitre IX Note the occurrence of "ce deraciné" in *Ottar Jarl*, III, 7 Quoted by R. Dreyfus *La Vie et les Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau*, p. 323 (Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1905).

³⁷ See Paul Bourget *Sensations d'Italie*, Paris, 1891, XXV where occurs the following passage "le regrette Comte de Gobineau, le plus perçant visionnaire de la race qui ait paru depuis cinquante ans" Also *Le Parlement* (the number of October 27th, 1882) *Etudes et Portraits M. de Gobineau* (XVII.) Gobineau's influence is discernible in *Où-mer*, (2 volumes, Paris, Lemerre)

great regionalistic movement which the youthful Gobineau was one of the first to launch ³⁸

Perhaps the most notable resemblance between our author's writings and those of his successors is their common distrust of Paris and hatred of certain features of modern civilization encountered in their most pronounced form in that centre. There is a common insistence that life should be lived fully and vigorously, a common desire for health in the national organism as well as in the individuals composing it. There is in Gobineau no less than in these writers a faith in tradition and a belief that progress can come only through continuity. There is on both sides an insistence that regional character must not be lost. The difference, as we have said, lies chiefly in Gobineau's pessimistic conclusion, the result of his sense for History, and in his comparative lack of patriotism ³⁹. There seems to have been a gradual wane in his patriotism. We have remarked that the *Voyage à Terre-Neuve*, which appeared in 1861, was still very patriotic in tone.

As for the political activities of the present nationalist group it would be clear to anyone who has read the passage on Sulla in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (Livre V chapitre VI *Rome Italote*) that

³⁸ Barrès appreciated Gobineau's efforts. See his article in *Le Gaulois*, June 3, 1907 *Un Nouveau Livre de Gobineau* (*La Troisième République* .)

³⁹ In a letter to his friend Prokesch-Osten, dated June 20, 1856, from Teheran, Gobineau explained why he was unable to share the optimism of De Maistre and Bonald who still counted on "un lendemain vainqueur". Quoted by Lange, *Biog.*, page 122.

Gobineau was too essentially realistic to have approved them, were he alive today ⁴⁰

Our author was not sympathetic to industrialism and in fact he felt too out of place in the industrial age to duly appreciate its accomplishments. Had he lived to see the Twentieth Century he could not have failed to realize the expenditure of human energy involved in the exploitation of the natural resources of the North American continent and in the building up of the gigantic industries of the United States. We can imagine him pointing out the ethnic factor and explaining a people's capacity for production by its greater vitality.⁴¹ His point of view would probably not have been very different, for there remains the problem of modern leisure. What is to be done with the leisure the machines have made possible and which future inventions may increase? Gobineau saw that modern man lacked worthy ideals and interests and that he was bound to be deficient in ardour.

An eloquent passage in his philosophical novel *Les Pléiades* satirizes modern man's preference for comfort. He sees future humanity represented by admirably cared for and nourished droves. Energy will have passed to steam.

⁴⁰ Gobineau would, however, have approved the present American immigration-policy. Favoring Anglo-Saxons, as he did, he would have sympathized with the efforts of the descendants of the early settlers to maintain their prerogatives. Although not optimistic even in regard to the United States, he considered decadence to be less imminent there. The efforts of the French nationalists to maintain an élite would have seemed as futile to him as was the celebrated attempt of Sulla to create an aristocracy in the Rome of his day.

⁴¹ See Clément Serpelle de Gobineau *Le Gobinisme et la pensée moderne*, Europe, revue mensuelle, Octobre 1923.

Our author frequently compared the decline of the Roman empire with the prospective fate of our present Western civilization. The only hope for us, in his estimation, lay in the greater proportion of Aryan blood which could be counted upon to retard the process of decay. In the chapter of the *Essai* entitled *Rome Sémitique* there are passages which apply or are considered to apply almost equally well to modern times. The most serious symptom is the lack of ardour. The "gaulois de la province" is described in the following manner: "un homme qui n'était ni Italiote, ni Grec, ni Asiatique, ni Gall, mais de tout cela un peu, et qui portait dans sa nationalité, formée d'éléments disparates, *cet esprit léger, ce caractère effacé et changeant, stigmaté de toutes les races dégénérées*" And elsewhere he says "Avec l'oubli de la race, avec l'extinction des maisons illustres dont les exemples guidaient jadis les multitudes, avec le syncrétisme des théologies, sont venus en foule, non pas les grands vices personnels, partage de tous les temps, mais cet universel relâchement de la morale ordinaire, cette incertitude de tous les principes, ce détachement de toutes les individualités de la chose publique, *ce scepticisme tantôt riant, tantôt morose* . . ."⁴² " . . . Dans la Rome sémitique les natures grandioses ne manquèrent pas. Tibère savait, pouvait, voulait et faisait. Vespasien, Mar-Aurèle, Trajan, Adrien, je compterais en foule les Césars dignes de la pourpre, mais tous, et le grand Septime Sévère lui-même, se reconnurent impuissants à guérir *le mal incurable et rongeur d'une multitude incohérente, sans instincts ni penchants définis*, rebelle à se laisser diriger longtemps vers le même but, et pourtant affamée de direction." In Gobineau's opinion the

⁴² Italics mine

two situations have much in common Throughout his work the idea of race is basic

It should be remarked, however, that despite his pessimism Gobineau was generally looking forward, having resigned himself to democracy Were it not for his pessimism, his standpoint would come exceedingly close to that of the democratic regionalist Count Carlo Sforza. Many critics seem to credit Gobineau as a thinker with too little agility. While it is true that he regarded racial toleration as symptomatic of decadence, it should be remembered that he differed from such soldiers of reaction as Metternich, De Maistre and Bonald by his sense for History which allowed him to recognize facts.

In *Ce qui est arrivé à la France en 1870* (a fragment published under that title in *Europe*, 1er Octobre, 1923) he argued that everything should be done to facilitate the rise to higher spheres of the "individus capables" of the lower classes. How clearly this distinguishes him from Paul Bourget who was in many respects his follower. Was it not the latter who preached that man was healthiest and happiest when he did not travel at all and when he lived out the span of his days in the place and in the social sphere in which he was born? Gobineau not only was an enthusiastic traveller, but recommended travel as indispensable to mental development.

It must be admitted that there were some inevitable inconsistencies between Gobineau's individualism and intelligent cosmopolitanism and his anti-intellectual respect for tradition On the other hand it might be argued that these different tendencies are all necessary from different points of view and that there might be some possibility of harmonizing them.

As for Barrès' nationalistic idea it could be said that it leads to an impasse. Nations disappear and nationalism as we know it may be a relatively short-lived phenomenon, but race does, at least in a sense, endure. By his race-mysticism our author was preserved from the narrow nationalism of a Barrès. We submit that Gobineau, for all his inconsistencies and his regrettable pessimism, seems to point the way for the modern individual.

IV — THE INDIVIDUAL SUPREME

In a letter to his friend Prokesch von Osten dated October 7th, 1872 Gobineau announced his philosophical novel *Les Pléiades* in the following manner "Je fais un roman très développé intitulé *Les Pléiades* ayant pour base cette idée qu'il n'y a plus de classes, qu'il n'y a plus de peuples, mais seulement, dans toute l'Europe quelques individualités surnageant comme des débris sur un déluge J'en espère beaucoup."

This distinguishes our author clearly from the nationalist Maurice Barrès We have arrived at the Count's individualist phase. Apparently, in his scheme, the way is left open for the individual or at least for a certain type of individual to freely develop his personality. Gobineau's racial determinism did not make him a fatalist¹ It is to many almost incomprehensible that the author of the pessimistic *Essai* should have been a voluntarist and the chief inspirer of Nietzsche's conception of the superman We are in the presence of an interesting example of the "instinct vital", it may be said that the determinism of Calvinistic theology is similarly corrected by a natural instinct which makes its adherents tend to consider themselves the elect

Gobineau insisted on nothing so much as he did on individual right Like Jean Jacques Rousseau he was forever preoccupied with the problem of the right relation of the individual to the state His viewpoint becomes clear from the following passage in *l'Ethnographie de la France*^{1a} which is one of his later writings.

¹ For a discussion of determinism and fatalism see my article *Determinism and Christianity in Unity* (Chicago), March 8th, 1926.

^{1a} *Gobineau's Rassenwerk* (L. Schemann), pp 457 ff.

"Cet homme (The Aryan "un vrai German") a importé en Europe l'idée du droit personnel bien connue de ses ancêtres de la Scythie, de l'Inde ou de la Perse, mais dont l'antiquité antique n'avait plus la moindre perception. De cette notion fondamentale, il a fait découler la civilisation de l'Occident. Il conçoit, il admet que ni la cité, ni le prince, ni la majorité des citoyens ne puissent prévaloir en toutes choses contre l'indépendance d'une personne donnée, si ce n'est par la force devenue abusive et flétrie comme telle." The insistence on individual right was, in Gobineau's opinion, an Aryan trait. It is interesting to observe Gobineau and Rousseau puzzling over this problem of the relation of the individual to the state and to compare their respective solutions. Both thinkers were, though for different reasons, dissatisfied with conditions obtaining at the time they lived and both were given to idealizing earlier ages. We have insisted elsewhere on Gobineau's greater realism and shown that his philosophy did not allow him to be optimistic about the future.

Perhaps the most typical thing about our author is his admiration for the Middle Ages and in particular of the Germanic freeman of that epoch. It is significant that he restricted the right to and aptitude for liberty to Aryans or peoples largely of Aryan blood. In other words government was for others! The Count's greatest concern, especially in the latter part of his life, seems to have been to determine what should be the attitude or conduct of modern individuals who are distinguished by Aryan traits.

Maurice Lange in his *Etude Biographique et Critique* of Count de Gobineau characterizes his psychol-

ogy as that of an "émigré à l'intérieur" Gobineau incarnates the rancor of that old feudal nobility which, after having been reduced through the jealousy of Kings to a sort of gilded servitude, received its death-blow in 1789. This explains his admiration for the medieval system of society under which kings were chosen by their peers and the conquered races and their descendants were kept in subjection. What M. Lange apparently fails to see is that Gobineau was many things besides a "féodal", that he was deeply affected by modern life and that his reaction to it is particularly interesting in view of recent developments. Critics have usually underestimated the author's significance to moderns. Gobineau seems to have carried over into his era the passionate independence and the jealous regard for personal prerogatives of the medieval lord. He had much of the knight in his personality; he is known to have borne Cervantes a grudge for having written *Don Quixote*! His lengthy posthumous poem *Amadis* sings the praises of the chivalrous ideal. It is interesting to trace in the Count's writings the gradual transference of this spirit from the physical to the intellectual plane.

It may be said that in a sense Gobineau and his successors carried further the revolt against society of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who was so convinced of the importance of the individual soul. Gobineau was an equally harsh critic of modern civilization, but his point of view was radically different. Whereas Rousseau was in revolt chiefly against the abuses of the "ancien régime" and against the artificial society of the eighteenth Century, Gobineau, who lived in a different age, attacked modern intellectualism and dilettantism. He was

particularly hostile to the rationalism inherited from the eighteenth Century and oppugned more than anything else the notion that men are equal and that they are everywhere essentially alike. He was mainly interested in superior individuals from whom he demanded a special attitude to life.

Gobineau's individualism was aristocratic and hence is easily enough distinguished from that of Rousseau. It was also less abstract, showing, as it did, concern for racial and cultural backgrounds. It was not anarchic as is that of many of Rousseau's disciples.² When Gobineau in one of his youthful writings branded individualism as the disease of modern times he had in mind that anarchic individualism.³

It is not difficult to distinguish our author's individualism from that of Henri Beyle (Stendhal) since he avowedly preferred the "père de famille" to the "bohémien égoïste". Also, Gobineau had little patience with the "mal du siècle" whether it took the form of Byronic revolt or of the despondency of an Alfred de Musset.

Gobineau satirized in *Les Pléiades* and in other stories the tendency decried by his successor Paul Bourget as dilettantism. In the latter's essay on Renan (*Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*) dilettantism is defined as follows: "C'est beaucoup moins une doctrine qu'une disposition d'esprit, très intelligente à la fois et très voluptueuse, qui nous incline tour à tour vers les formes diverses de la vie et nous conduit à nous prêter à toutes ces formes sans nous donner à aucune." On another page of the same essay a passage which shows

² Rousseau was for the moral independence of the individual, but he never advocated social anarchy.

³ See the quotation in Chapter III, p. 120.

Bourget to have been a pupil of Gobineau's, explains the underlying reason for this phenomenon "Une des lois de notre époque n'est elle pas le mélange le plus chaotique des idées, le conflit dans nos cerveaux, à tous, des rêves de l'univers élaborés par les diverses races?"

In his intellectual mood and as an artist Count de Gobineau enjoyed the interesting variety resulting in modern times from the confusion of cultures. The social theorist, however, was more impressed by certain accompanying phenomena such as scepticism, dilettantism and levelling. The scepticism⁴ and dilettantism prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries, as well as in our day, must probably be ascribed in large measure to the chaotic confusion of ideas, but there is still another aspect, life in society entails the cultivation of like-mindedness and stresses the virtue of adaptability. The civilizing-process has meant the accumulation of a vast number of facts and the gradual growth of an important body of general truths. This, though inevitable and highly desirable, has undoubtedly brought some disadvantages in its wake. In emphasizing the fact of temperament and in insisting upon the importance of individual truths Gobineau foreshadowed in some of its phases the pragmatic philosophy of William James⁵. He stood for an aggressive individualism, believing that men should valiantly defend their individual truths, in short their personalities. He would have us carry into the in-

⁴ Compare Chapter III, pp 166-167, Gobineau's description of conditions in the Ancient Roman Empire.

⁵ Although Wm James' pragmatism involved the cultivation of individual truths, it should be remarked that in him social adaptation was far more perfect than in Gobineau. Connecting Gobineau with modern pragmatism is hazardous, especially in view of the remoteness from him of the viewpoint of James' successor, J. Dewey.

tellectual sphere some of the virtues of the medieval knight. Thus Gobineau belongs with Barrès, James and Nietzsche in the vitalistic current.

"Les Pléiades" from which we shall have occasion to quote extensively, was written in that part of the author's life which has been termed the ascetic period. A reading of this novel would fail to give one an adequate idea of his personality and message. There is a note of bitterness and a sort of discouragement together with a weak nostalgia for the past to which one is not accustomed in his work. The following quotation from a letter Count de Gobineau wrote to his friend Prokesch von Osten on July 20th, 1862 is a valuable offset: "Quand la vie n'est pas une bataille, elle n'est rien. Autrefois la bataille était matérielle, et nous autres nous passions notre temps à cheval avec de l'acier sur le dos et dans les mains. Aujourd'hui la bataille avec les autres n'est pas moins vive, mais nous y avons ajouté avec nous-mêmes une lutte et une guerre plus permanente encore et plus avivée. L'incertitude des idées, le grand nombre des objets de comparaison, plus de notions de justice nous ont tirés de grandes quiétudes, et d'autre part nous avons besoin de nous connaître nous-mêmes, de perfectionner les ressources que nous avons en nous. La gymnastique corporelle a fait place à une gymnastique morale qui ne cesse jamais, et quand nous avons le courage de la poursuivre incessamment, nous sommes étonnés quelquefois de nous voir nous-mêmes escalader des hauteurs dont nous ne connaissions pas même l'existence, tant elles étaient bien cachées par des séries de collines que nous ne croyions jamais pouvoir dépasser. On va en avant, comme ces voyageurs qui, devant des torrents qu'ils traversent, des

champs de neige qu'ils franchissent, arrivent à des vallées hautes tapissées de rhododendrons en fleurs roses. Ils s'étonnent que la nature soit si grande là où elle est cachée, et, dans le silence de la solitude où les ont portés leurs efforts, ils sourient de l'innocente faiblesse des habitants des plaines. Ainsi sont les gens qui escaladent leur propre esprit, et cela donne une éternelle jeunesse."

This passage shows among other things the author's preoccupation with the question of the rôle of the modern thinker. It should also be contrasted with the famous declaration of Henri Beyle (Stendhal) "se changer? Duperie. Je me soumets à mes défauts."

As we shall see later Gobineau heralds Nietzsche also in his attitude to Christianity.

The philosophical novel, *Les Pléiades*, was written in the last decade of our author's life. His vitality had been permanently lowered not only as the result of fevers contracted in Brazil, but also by the aggregate effect of a number of grievous disappointments which detached him from his country. There is to be added the gradual estrangement from his wife from whom he separated definitively in the year 1874. In the last ten or eleven years of his life Count de Gobineau was not quite himself, tending more and more to take refuge in a haughty stoicism. The letters he wrote during this period have for their dominant theme the usefulness of suffering.

During his abode in Stockholm, Sweden, whither he was sent as French ambassador in 1872, the Count lived in a modest apartment on the third floor of number 13 Nybrogatan which street is in the vicinity of the harbor.

He had since the Franco-Prussian War been in reduced circumstances due in a measure to his liberality but owing largely to the excessive expense of the upkeep of his castle in Normandy which indeed had been a veritable burden since its purchase in 1857. His wife and daughter remained in the Château de Trye, but the original plan had been for them to join him later in Sweden.

The family had spent some happy years in Trye and had enjoyed being in their own home. After his return from Brazil on a leave of absence in May, 1870, Gobineau had been appointed "conseiller général" of the canton of Chaumont en Vexin. There followed, however, the difficult period of the war. He occupied this post and was in his castle during the Prussian invasion. Gobineau had foreseen some of the happenings of that year, but until the tenth of August he had hoped for a victory at Metz. He did his patriotic duty during these difficult years. He felt deeply for his people and did what he could to alleviate suffering. There is ample testimony as to the value of his work in this crisis.⁶ There can be no doubt as to the mental anguish he suffered in this period. He felt, moreover, as though he understood that unprecedented catastrophe as did few others. We are acquainted with his view of history and know that he had always considered the political instability of his country an evil omen. On the 19th of August, 1870, he wrote to a friend: "J'ai le chagrin d'avoir eu trop raison . . . A l'heure actuelle il ne s'agit pas de récriminer mais d'agir."

⁶ See Saint Loup, *l'Oublie de Trye-Château* in *l'Éclair*, 3 août, 1911.

Gobineau was in a sense very content during his life in Stockholm, for the North had always fascinated him and he liked the Swedish people. Among his friends were Philippe von Eulenburg, Count Zaluski, the Austrian chargé d'affaires, who was musical, and Countess de la Tour, the wife of the Italian minister. Our author devoted much time to sculpture in these years. His interest in art may partially explain his intimate friendship with the Countess who was a talented painter. There will probably always be some obscurity in the question of our author's domestic tragedy. While the Countess de la Tour was undeniably a factor in the gradual estrangement of Gobineau from his family, it is certain that we owe to her the reawakening of his creative talent. *Les Pléiades* and *La Renaissance* might never have been written but for her inspiring influence. She lifted him up out of his profound discouragement by her sympathy, and through her understanding of his ideals and aims gave him a new lease of life. Nevertheless what has been said of the change in his personality holds true, one can, for instance, agree with the observation of Paul Colin in his article in *Europe* that in this last decade of his life our author "cut himself off from the world of living ideas" by his pessimism.

Count de Gobineau's great quest seems to have been for an ideal for the modern man. What appears very clearly in this philosophical novel of his maturity is that he had recognized the fusion of races and classes as inevitable and turned his attention to the superior individual. If it be true, as many writers of the present day aver, that the ascertainment of a sound individualism is the distinctive problem of our age, we cannot but profit

by a consideration of wherein the superiority of individuals may consist. Let us then follow Gobineau in his search. Our author shows a certain suspicion of modern individualism and ponders the question of wherein true greatness should consist amid the heterogeneity of modern society. He makes a sharp distinction between this and the sort of greatness to be found in the more homogeneous communities of earlier ages. The following passages in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* are an important aid in understanding our author's philosophy. It is clear that in Gobineau's mind the interest of the group is nearly always uppermost. In order to understand what follows it is essential to remember that for him institutions are ethnically conditioned. During epochs, according to Gobineau, when racial mixture had not become excessive and there was an harmonious combination of races, great men were rarer and stood out the more from their fellows because, belonging as they did to a homogeneous group, their greatness consisted not in incongruity but rather in their greater wealth of the general merits: "A de pareils moments de la vie des sociétés, il est très difficile d'être un grand homme, puisqu'il n'y a pas moyen d'être un homme étrange. L'homogénéité du sang s'y oppose, et pour se distinguer du vulgaire il faut, non pas être autrement fait que lui, mais, au contraire, en lui ressemblant, dépasser toutes ses proportions. . . Ainsi les hommes d'élite demeurent isolés, comme le sont les arbres de haute futaie au milieu d'un taillis." With this he contrasts Roman society under the emperors: "Dans l'état homogène le nombre des hommes remarquables était restreint; ici, au

sein d'une société formée de disparates, ce nombre se montre tout à coup très considérable, bigarré de mille manières, et depuis le grand guerrier qui étend les bornes d'un empire jusqu'au joueur de violon qui réussit à faire grincer d'une manière acceptable deux notes jusque là ennemies, des légions de gens acquièrent la renommée. Toute cette cohue s'élance au-dessus des multitudes en perpétuelle fermentation, les tire à droite et à gauche, abuse de leur impossibilité fatalement acquise de discerner le vrai, même d'avoir une vérité au-dessus d'elles et fait pulluler les causes de désordre. C'est en vain que les supériorités sérieuses s'efforcent de remédier au mal. . ."

In Gobineau's thought the racial idea was always at least in the background.

His individualism was aristocratic. The "fils de roi" conception of *Les Pléiades*, wherein he approaches Nietzsche's ideal of the superman, has much of the disdainful attitude of the born aristocrat. Nowhere in Gobineau's fiction is there a character like the plebeian Julien Sorel. He had Stendhal's scorn for society-life and the weakening of moral fibre it entailed, he even caricatured the nobility in *Ternove*, one of his early novels. He admired the energy of Sorel, the hero of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, who, indignant at the way mediocrities were everywhere protected in the face of the idealism of democratic theory, was determined to succeed at all costs. His sympathy with the "arriviste," apparent in *Ternove*, is natural in view of what his own life had been. But that does not alter the fact that he was always fundamentally the nobleman.

*Ternove*⁷ affords another illustration of the fact that Gobineau saw life from the point of view of an aristocrat who is placed at a disadvantage in the modern world; this one can see in many of the personages in his fiction. We quoted in the preceding chapter the passage in *Terre-Neuve* which shows the author's hostility to the "faible dominant"

Octave de Ternove, the aristocratic hero of Gobineau's novel, is a victim of the French Revolution who has been deprived of his birthright by a brutal Jacobin miller. The mainspring of his existence is hatred of the new order of society. He is in revolt against revolt and lives but to restore his family to its former position.

The hero of Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Julien Sorel, is a worshipper of Napoleon. He is a plebeian in revolt against the privileged classes, who by sheer energy and wit rises to considerable heights in society. But he has aristocratic traits and even the physical descrip-

⁷ At the beginning of the eighth chapter of *Ternove* there is a characteristic passage which is interesting from the point of view of vitalism. The author is describing the reaction of the Parisian populace to Napoleon's return from exile on February 26th, 1815. Gobineau is critical of the lack of seriousness of the people in the face of such an important event. " . . . ; chacun s'occupait de soi, menait son train habituel, considérant des événements immenses comme ne le regardant pas, et n'y voyait occasion qu'à se livrer aux passions loquaces et inoffensives qui sont si fort et si souvent à la disposition de nos Français." Further on he speaks of "la curiosité ardente qui fait du Parisien l'homme sceptique et pratique par excellence." This should be compared with a passage in an early article in the *Revue Provinciale* which we quote (in Chapter III, page 8) and with the delineation of such characters as Charles Cabert in *La Chasse au Caribou* and Louis Laudon in *Les Pélées*. *Ternove* was written during our author's sojourn at Redon in Brittany. It appeared first as a serial novel in the *Journal des Débats* in 1847. In this work liberal use is made of the valuable memoirs of the author's father, Captain Louis de Gobineau, who was one of the ardent royalists to emigrate and follow the Comte d'Artois to Ghent and who was imprisoned at Vincennes for having refused to serve under the Empire.

tion of him given in the fourth chapter can not be said to differ enormously from the one Gobineau gives of his hero Julien Sorel, the young peasant, would also have been a soldier had he not recognized the fact that in his epoch, that of the Restoration, an ecclesiastical career afforded greater opportunities for achieving distinction. Stendhal's hero is the stronger character.

With all the differences there is a great similarity in the temper of the two novels. Both authors were primarily interested in the superiority which manifests itself in strength of character and in aspirations toward greater things. This may be noted fully as much in the portrayal of the feminine figures as in that of the men, although Mlle. de la Mole, who could be compared to the character of Adélaïde in Gobineau's *nouvelle*, has no counterpart in *Ternove*. It is mainly this exalted character that distinguishes the heroes of Stendhal and Gobineau from the climbers of *La Comédie Humaine*. Also, while Balzac's principal concern seems to have been to show people in the grip of their environment, these authors stress the control a superior individual may acquire over external circumstances.

In *Ternove* the author brings out very clearly the philosophical idea of the pernicious influence of excessive racial mixture and particularly the mischief done by misalliances. Maurice Lange suggests as a subtitle "Comment on défait les bonnes maisons". But more important still, in our view, is the psychological conflict in the soul of the hero, Octave, who is torn between ambition and sentiment and finds it impossible to reconcile his heroic determination to redeem his family's honor and to mend its fortunes with the deep love inspired by

his cousin Marguerite. The subtitle "A house divided against itself shall not stand" is equally fitting

Octave's character was not strong because it was composed of too many diverse elements ("pétri d'éléments multiples"), which kept him from achieving singleness of purpose. He lacked the power of not deviating once he had decided on a certain course of action, "cette vertu de ne pas dévier" which distinguished the marquis de Candeuil of *Les Pléiades*. In this psychological novel, *Ternove*, Gobineau demonstrated the same principle for the individual that he had been anxious to establish for collectivities in his racial theory. This novel plays at the time of Napoleon's return from Elba and is very interesting, aside from the psychological aspect of the individual characters, because it reflects so perfectly the temper of that agitated period in French History

There is in *Le Rouge et le Noir* a passage which approximates its author's position to the intellectual aristocracy of *Les Pléiades*, the philosophical novel of Gobineau's maturity. It is evident that Stendhal did not approve of democracy unconditionally. His liberalism did not prevent him from showing an intense hatred of mediocrity. The passage, to which we refer, ends with the words. "malheur à qui se distingue!"

The main difference between Stendhal and Gobineau is that the former favored Southern and the latter Northern civilization. The divergence in their conceptions is less extreme than many have supposed. They agreed in their contempt for modern Paris, for they both adored energy. Gobineau's admiration for the Italians of the fifteenth Century in *La Renaissance* and the spirit of

Le Mouchour Rouge and of some of the Oriental Tales could be called "beylistic"

Gobineau's "homme supérieur" resembles the ideal of Stendhal. But Gobineau like Barrès is more inclined to think of the individual as a member of a group and to stress his social duties. Both have transcended the narrow conception of the "course au bonheur" and both, but especially Gobineau in his emphasis on self-discipline, herald Nietzsche and his aspiration toward a higher humanity. It is surprising that Monsieur Andler should ignore our author when tracing the development of the ideas we associate with Nietzsche. Of Stendhal he says in his *Précurseurs de Nietzsche*. "L'arrière-pensée de Stendhal comme chez Burckhardt qui la lui emprunte, et chez Nietzsche qui en est redevable à tous deux, c'est de découvrir par quels moyens naît dans l'enveloppe des coutumes nationales et des formes politiques la personnalité supérieure"

In France Gobineau's torch was taken up and carried on by such men as Bordeaux, Bourget and Barrès. The latter, in particular, developed much further the Cult of the Self.

Les Pléiades which Tancred de Visan calls "ce roman de l'ascétisme et de l'énergie humains" treats in a somewhat different manner from Stendhal's *Chartreuse de Parme* of the psychology of love. It is so deficient in symmetry as to fall short of the standards of a true work of art. It is a series of psychological portraits which prove the exceptional keenness of the author's powers of observation, instead of there being one plot there is an enchainment of plots, none of which seems to take precedence over the others.

The fundamental idea of *Les Pléiades*, aside from the idea of the aristocracy of the elect, is that people should live courageously and intensely, live in the fullest sense of the word. It is to a certain extent the theme of the "Peur de Vivre" of Henri Bordeaux. The author sounds a warning against those factors in modern sophisticated society that tend to blight or kill the basic elements of moral life. Count de Gobineau was a moralist intent upon finding a worthy ideal of conduct for modern man. His chief interest was in the superior individual, as one can judge from the following passage occurring in the fourth chapter of the third book. "Je pense que l'honnête homme, l'homme qui se sent une âme, a plus que jamais le devoir impérieux de se replier sur lui-même, et, ne pouvant sauver les autres, de travailler à s'améliorer. C'est essentiellement l'oeuvre des temps comme le nôtre. Tout ce que la société perd ne disparaît pas, mais se réfugie dans des existences individuelles." Gobineau's intentions in this novel may be gleaned from the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. Critics have usually seen in the novel an attempt to characterize psychologically the three leading nations of Europe, but this could not have been the real purpose of our author, who was ever primarily interested in racial values and whom nations impressed as relatively ephemeral. In the *Dédicace* of the first edition of his *Essai* to King George of Hanover he professed to be like his predecessor Stendhal interested in "la géologie morale". Laudon, the Frenchman, Nore, the Englishman and Lanze, the German represent, it is true, national types, but this is not the essential thing since their characters are thought to be, in the main, racially determined. He was less interested in national psycholo-

gy than was Stendhal Throughout his literary career Gobineau was busy cataloguing human values, but there is now this difference that he is concerned with individuals whose superior qualities, in his opinion, presuppose the survival despite racial fusion of the traits of the "noble race"

The scene of the novel is laid chiefly in a small German principality, Burbach, and the time is about the middle of the nineteenth Century. Jacques de Lacretelle has very fittingly compared the pleasure one may derive from reading this story with that experienced by the connoisseur in a picture-gallery. One infers from the name that the principal characters are intended to represent a constellation.

We meet first three travellers, a Frenchman, a German and an Englishman, who, though almost total strangers to each other, have met for dinner at an inn on the island of Isola Bella on Lake Maggiore. All three were above gluttony, being lovers of nature and worshippers of beauty After terminating their repast they had remained seated at the window of the inn enjoying the sunset on the lake They appreciated the conversation of people of their kind and were in the mood for confidences.

After a preamble in which he made sure that he was not dealing with "d'honnêtes bourgeois, pleins de réalités et astreints sérieusement aux usages, ordonnances, règlements de la vie commune", Wilfred Nore, the Englishman, who is described as "un grand jeune homme blond à tournure distinguée" startled his companions by declaring that they were "three calenders, sons of kings", each blind in one eye. To the objection of Louis Laudon,

who is ready to admit the moral blindness but not the kingly quality, he replies in the following manner "Ceci provient, répondit Nore avec vivacité, de ce que vous n'examinez la question que d'un côté unique, et précisément le plus insignifiant. Donnez-vous la peine de descendre au fond des choses, je vous prie. Quand le conteur arabe, prêtant la parole à son héros, débute dans ses récits par lui faire prononcer ces mots sacramentels "Je suis fils de roi" il ne se trouve pas une seule fois sur plus de cent où le personnage ainsi présenté soit autre chose, quant à son extérieur, qu'un pauvre diable fort maltraité de la fortune. en prononçant cette parole magique "Je suis fils de roi", le narrateur établit du premier mot, et sans avoir besoin de détailler sa pensée, qu'il est doué de qualités particulières, précieuses, en vertu desquelles il s'élève naturellement au-dessus du vulgaire. "Je suis fils de roi" ne veut donc nullement dire. "Mon père n'est pas négociant, militaire, écrivain, artiste, banquier, chaudronnier ou chef de gare " "Cela signifie Je suis d'un tempérament hardi et généreux, étranger aux suggestions ordinaires des naturels communs. Mes goûts ne sont pas ceux de la mode; je sens par moi-même et n'aime ni ne hais d'après les indications du journal. L'indépendance de mon esprit, la liberté la plus absolue dans mes opinions sont des privilèges inébranlables de ma noble origine, Le ciel me les a conférés dans mon berceau à la façon dont les fils de France recevaient le cordon bleu du Saint-Esprit et tant que je vivrai, je les garderai. Enfin, par une conséquence très logiquement issue de ces prémisses, je ne suis pas heureux de ce qui suffit à la plèbe, et je cherche dans les bijoux que le ciel a mis à la portée des hommes d'autres bijoux que ceux dont elle s'affolle. D'où me

viennent tant de distinctions, si fortes, si marquées, qui me mettent tellement à part de l'entourage que cet entourage, assurément, me sent étranger à lui et ne m'en porte qu'une bienveillance des plus médiocres. Evidemment de ce que je suis fils de roi, puisque la qualité royale a surtout cet effet de placer celui qui la possède et en dehors et au-dessus du gros des subordonnés, des sujets et des esclaves."

The German, Conrad Lanze, understands and agrees with him, he develops the theme further in a manner which the Englishman approves. When the latter estimates that the number of "cerveaux bien faits et coeurs bien battants" is between 3000 and 3500 Lanze considers him too optimistic.

Of the three young men it is easy to see that Nore holds the highest place in the author's esteem. It is especially by contrasting him with the Parisian Laudon that one comes to appreciate him. Throughout the novel in conversations with others he gives evidence of an undeniable elevation of character. Laudon falls far short, at least at first, of exhibiting the true characteristics of the "fils de roi."

The creation of Louis Laudon is a masterpiece of irony. As a psychological characterization of a Frenchman it would be far from adequate, but as the portrayal of a certain Parisian type it is of undoubted interest. This type has been studied by a number of distinguished French authors. He is, for example, the prototype of Paul Bourget's dilettante. We let him introduce himself: "La nature m'a doué d'une force essentiellement passive. Je suis contemplatif par essence, et c'est à l'examen des choses que se bornent mes capacités. Je

suis, en face des vanités de ce monde, une sorte d'inspecteur aux revues. Je ne me mêle pas à l'escadron des passions ni à l'infanterie des goûts, ni à l'artillerie des fantaisies, pour conduire les charges des unes, les attaques des autres, les évolutions des troisièmes. Non, je me mets là pour regarder tout, voir ce qui existe, ce qui fonctionne, et bien que portant l'uniforme de l'armée, du moment que le tapage commence, je n'en suis plus, et mon état est de me tenir à l'écart, de distinguer ce qui tombe d'avec ce qui reste debout et d'en tenir registre. Sans vanité, je ne vois guère que les abeilles auxquelles je puisse justement me comparer. Je butine sur les surfaces." Laudon prided himself on being entirely free from "enthousiasme pour quoi que ce soit"

When still quite young Laudon had received from a cousin, de Hautebraye, the following advice "Ne sois pas trop sage, cela ennue; ne sois pas vicieux, cela effraye; ne sois pas spirituel à tout propos, cela blesse, impose de suite l'idée que tu n'es pas facile à attraper, cela donne un air capable, et puis laisse venir" Laudon expressed himself as follows to his new friends: "Mais, afin d'en arriver au point suprême, tenez pour certain que c'est à l'éducation publique que nous, Français, nous devons le trait principal de notre caractère moderne, celui qui nous suit de l'enfance à la tombe, la peur horrible de passer pour dupes, et la résolution bien arrêtée de tout faire au monde afin d'éviter un pareil malheur." This brings to mind Stendhal's observations on Parisian mentality in "De l'Amour".

Laudon was intelligent and not without culture. "Il avait de l'honneur, un coeur de substance légère, facile à fêler, aussi facile à raccommorder; perspicace pour les

petites choses, myope pour les grandes, dont il ne découvrait que des parties, sans jamais saisir l'ensemble, . " He was exceedingly curious of the affairs of others owing to the fact that his own were of such slight importance When travelling in Switzerland he had for a while kept a diary but this was soon put away and forgotten "Laudon avait assez l'usage de commencer les choses, mais une horreur naturelle l'empêchait de les continuer et encore plus de les finir."

He became quite attached to both Nore and Lanze in whom he discovered qualities foreign to his nature. Laudon had lived in an environment unfavorable to the development of his best qualities Until the meeting with Nore and Lanze described in the opening chapter his best friends had been a Monsieur et Madame Gennevilliers For Madame Gennevilliers he had an absurd cult which he dignified with the name of love Henri de Gennevilliers is a popular and successful young justemilieu deputy and the object of the author's scorn; "Henri de Gennevilliers, ami intime et le mentor de Laudon, était d'un caractère fort honorable Il appartenait au parti conservateur, en outre, il était libéral et attachait une importance extrême, comme tous les gens sages, à pouvoir dire à chaque contradicteur, avec un sourire attirant: "Nous sommes moins loin l'un de l'autre que vous ne semblez croire! De cette façon il avait des affinités avec les légitimistes, il n'en avait pas moins avec les démocrates, et se balançait ainsi en inclinant tour à tour de tous les côtés, et cherchant à donner un peu raison à tout le monde Il passait sa vie à chercher la solution des problèmes sociaux. Il s'inquiétait de statistique, d'économie politique, d'institutions charitables,

en faveur desquelles il dépensait beaucoup mais surtout, il prêchait la transformation morale des prolétaires qui, à l'aide de saines doctrines de renoncement et d'abnégation résultant de principes religieux aussi solides qu'éclairés, devaient un jour devenir sobres, chastes, patients et désintéressés, tout à fait désabusés sur les bals publics et irréconciliables ennemis du cabaret. Il ne croyait pas précisément ces choses là crûment comme il faut les dire pour se faire comprendre Il les espérait, il y travaillait, il y tendait, c'est encore un mot moderne pour exprimer qu'on veut une chose sans la vouloir, parce qu'elle est impossible . "

There is at the end of the seventh chapter of Book I, in which Laudon, "troisième calendrier, fils de roi" tells his story, an interesting passage which reveals Gobineau's viewpoint "Je ne sais pas si, vous autres, vous comprendrez qu'avec cet amour, tel qu'il est, (the friendship of Mme de Gennevilliers) je m'estime fort heureux Il faut savoir que les Français sont de tous les peuples du monde celui qui se contente à moins de frais Les Anglais, les Allemands, les Italiens vont courir les terres et les mers pour gagner de grosses fortunes Dans ce genre de turbulence, les Américains tiennent école. Il se peut que ces aventuriers réussissent, mais souvent aussi ils échouent, et, dans tous les cas, la plus grande partie de leur existence se passe à être ballotté d'incertitude en périls et de périls en chocs violents Cela leur plaît et nous est odieux. Ainsi, nous voyez-vous, dans toutes les classes, constamment soucieux de nous arranger une bonne petite médiocrité héréditaire. Le paysan s'occupe beaucoup moins d'améliorer son sort, en risquant un peu de ce qu'il a, que de trouver une

cachette sûre pour y enfour et conserver son mince trésor L'homme de catégorie moyenne a végété sa vie entière, afin de devenir juge en province ou médiocre employé, mais il prépare obstinément ses fils à l'imiter, en vue de la retraite, aussi certaine que misérable, au moyen de laquelle lui et eux termineront leur carrière Un bon tiens vaut mieux que deux tu l'auras, et c'est pourquoi vous me voyez enchanté de moi-même et des autres" This is precisely the theme of "La Peur de Vivre".

In the Introduction to that novel Henri Bordeaux thus defines the fear of living: "For the fear of living is exactly this to deserve neither blame nor praise. . . It is to care constantly and solely for one's tranquillity It is to flee from responsibilities, struggles, risks, effort It is to carefully avoid danger, fatigue, exaltation, passion, enthusiasm, sacrifice, all of which are violent emotions and disturb and inconvenience one It is to refuse to life, which demands them, one's heart, perspiration, and blood In short, it is to pretend to live while limiting life. . . it is the passive egoism which prefers to diminish one's appetite rather than provide a bountiful meal by one's own efforts, and limits itself to the sordidness of a colorless and insipid life, provided only that it is sure of not encountering shocks, difficulties, or obstacles like a traveler who would consent to travel only on level ground and on rubber-tired wheels." (This translation occurs in the edition by Henry Ward Church)

As for Louis Laudon his character was destined to become modified in association with his newly-found friends. Leaving them he returned to France to visit the Gennevilliers, but he was happy neither there nor later

on in Paris in his accustomed circle The stimulating contacts at the Burbach court had perturbed him to a point where he could only compare himself to a hot-house plant which has suddenly been exposed to the fresh air. "Il ne voulut plus retourner au club Il ne prit pas plaisir au monde Il cherchait quelque chose d'autre, et ne savait pas se dire en lui-même ce qu'il souhaitait. De coeur, d'esprit, d'imagination, de volonté, il était desoeuvré et ne s'apercevait pas que cet état provenait uniquement de ce que chez lui, coeur, imagination, volonté, esprit, avaient percé la glace de son éducation et de ses premières habitudes, et demandaient un aliment sain et nourrissant"

An interesting modern note in Gobineau's work is his inclusion of women among the pléiades Harriet Coxe is one of the most beautiful creations in literature In her are embodied what the author considered to be the traits of the noble Aryan.⁸ She can, in a sense, be said to represent his ideal of modern womanhood Yet with all her heroism she is convincing and always perfectly natural. It is interesting to compare her with Akrivie Phrangopoulo; whereas there simplicity had been celebrated we find here an idealization of the well informed and accomplished modern girl who, while nobly fulfilling all her duties to her family, has found time to develop her mind and has broadened her horizon. The author lays the emphasis, however, on the power of her will "C'était une fille saxonne, faite pour se vaincre elle-même et les autres, et elle le faisait; non sans souffrir, sans réclamer, se plaindre en elle-même, sans éprouver

⁸ She is an idealization of a modern representative of that race. She is, of course, not meant to be a pure Aryan.

la cuisson de tous les piquants de l'imagination en révolte, mais sans faiblir une seconde dans sa résolution de ne pas rendre autrui témoin de ses défaillances "

In another passage in the novel Gobineau recurs once more to a favorite theme of his, that of the complexity of the modern soul. It is still in connection with Harriet Coxe "Les sculpteurs grecs ont connu la Beauté. Ils l'ont vue émue quelquefois, mais par des passions simples comme elle. Ils ont contemplé dans cette sublime image l'intelligence droite, cherchant peu, trouvant ce qu'elle voulait; les fronts bas, aux tempes puissamment développées des statues et de toutes ces figures promenées au long des bas-reliefs, ne montrent pas davantage. La pensée de ces temps fournissait aux artistes un thème admirable et court. Peu de moyens existaient de le varier; en le reproduisant sans cesse on en perfectionnait les détails peu nombreux, d'autant plus faciles à rendre, et c'est ainsi que l'art antique toucha à la perfection.

Mais nous, moins accomplis, moins élevés, nous occupons plus de points, nous voyons plus d'idées, nous savons davantage, et ce que nous devinons à demi s'étend infiniment plus loin. Ni les passions, ni les sentiments, ni les besoins, ni les instincts, ni les désirs, ni les craintes ne sont demeurés accroupis sur l'humble degré où la philosophie de Platon les trouva. Tout a monté, tout a multiplié. Ce peuple de génies ailés, qui nous mène, nous dirige ou nous égare, s'appelle désormais légion, et c'est lui qui, pétrissant les âmes, fait refléter sur la face humaine des expressions, des significations que ni Praxitèle, ni Phidias n'avaient pu comprendre. Ces maîtres n'auraient point regardé la physionomie d'Har-

riet si elle avait passé devant eux, pour eux ce n'eût pas été la Beauté. C'était la Beauté pourtant, la Beauté d'une ère qui n'est pas celle de la joie, mais celle de la vie doublée et redoublée: "Un long cri d'espérance a traversé la terre" Et cette espérance est celle d'échapper triomphalement aux étrointes du mal, en s'enfermant dans les murs solidement construits d'une volonté dominatrice. Voilà ce que faisait Harriet, et voilà pourquoi, n'étant plus jeune, n'ayant jamais été belle dans le sens classique de ce mot, elle était devenue, par l'exercice de la pensée, par l'effet de la souffrance, par la vigueur de la résolution, voilà pourquoi elle était devenue plus que belle." Both this passage and the one from the letter to his friend von Osten⁹ which we have quoted earlier in this chapter, should be compared with the literary essays of his youth.

The complexity of modern psychology is a favorite topic with Gobineau. Aside from the passages in this novel and others in his literary essays we find it in the pages of "The Golden Flower", a series of essays which is intended to serve as an Introduction to his Renaissance drama. The essay on Savonarola contains an interesting discussion on modern as contrasted with ancient art. One is reminded in more than one passage in his writings of a certain chapter in Mme. de Stael's *De l'Allemagne* (Book I, chapter 9, "De la poésie classique et de la poésie romantique") in which she treats of the simplicity of the ancients and contrasts with it the complexity of the modern soul which has been moulded by the Christian religion. Characteristically Gobineau no-

⁹ Beginning with the words "Quand la vie n'est pas une bataille. . ."

where emphasizes the Christian element. The author may not entirely disagree with what Mme de Staël says of the influence of the practise of Christian virtues on the modern personality, but he says nothing about it either in *Les Pléiades* or in the passage on the medieval mind in *La Fleur d'Or* where he speaks of its "passion for the infinite" and of its "passion for transfiguring things in accordance with a mode superior to earthly conditions"¹⁰ Gobineau is consistent when he neglects the religious factor. It will be remembered that the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* minimized the importance of the Christian religion as a force in civilization, other factors than irreligion were, in his view, responsible for the decay of civilizations. We have said elsewhere that Gobineau was reticent except in the most intimate circles as to his opinion of Christianity. We do not find a sincere expression of his opinion on this subject (except to a limited extent in the *Essai*) in his writings.

There is much that heralds Frederic Nietzsche in Gobineau's attitude to religion. Dr Kretzer¹¹ relates the following anecdote. One day at Wahnfried, when Richard Wagner was defending the ideas of Schopenhauer and the ethics of pity, Gobineau protested that in his view it was a mistake in this world of misery to prefer the poor to the rich, the simpleton to the sage and the cripple to the man who is strong and sound. To an accusation

¹⁰ The nearest he comes to Mme de Staël is probably in the following passage in the essay on Savonarola in *La Fleur d'Or*: "Mais le goût, le besoin de l'expression idéale et en même temps vraie et vivante existait en Italie comme ailleurs, le sentiment germanique et chrétien ne se contentait pas de l'ancienne beauté."

¹¹ J. A. Kretzer *Graf von Gobineau*, page 53, cited by Seillière in *Le Comte de Gobineau et l'aryanisme historique*. See also Bayreuther Blätter

of harshness he replied that a noble nature would of its own accord, regardless of circumstances and independently of precepts, show compassion and readiness for sacrifice. To the Christian's resignation and tender forgiveness the Count opposed the aristocratic dignity of the pagan who accepts uncomplainingly and renounces with a tinge of disdain. One cannot insist too strongly on the difference between Gobineau and Richard Wagner.¹²

One of the most interesting characters in the novel is the Polish Countess. Countess Tonska is the type of the unstable Slav. "La femme toujours froide, mais toujours bouillonnante, toujours en révolte, toujours en quête de ce qu'elle ne se flattait guère de trouver. . ." She is a kind of adventuress but one who has sufficient regard for public opinion to remain respectable in the conventional sense. She has never really loved anyone but herself. The following quotation describes her in one of her serious moods when she was endeavoring to be sincere with herself. Not being a philosopher she was wont to see herself as it pleased her fancy: ". . . en somme, me voilà à bout de voie, mourant d'ennui et ne voyant plus à quoi me retenir, et moi, la fierté, l'orgueil, l'audace, passant ma vie à jouer les comédies les plus aventurées, parce que je comprends tout et ne réussis à

¹² Gobineau and Wagner met for the first time in Rome in November, 1876, but their friendship dates from the second meeting in Venice in 1880. They were drawn to each other by their common admiration of the nordic peoples and their sagas. The Count felt poetically what the German composer expressed in his music and his poem *Amadis* which celebrates the ascetic Aryan hero, who is both warrior and saint, contains a sort of homage to German and especially Wagnerian music. See *Amadis*, Book 1. 3d canto. But Richard Wagner's idea of the redemption of humanity through art and religion is entirely foreign to our author who considered its decadence irremediable.

être sincère en rien ! On m'a aimée ; je n'y tiens pas ! Je crois à tout ce qu'il faut croire et reste indifférente ! Je me sens incapable de rien faire de vil, de bas, de vulgaire, de rêver des distractions indignes en réalité, je suis la vertu, et je ne peux pourtant estimer quoi que ce soit de ce qui meuble la sphère d'où je ne voudrais pas sortir " Her nature was ever true to itself. She would repeatedly go through a certain number of characteristic stages without ever getting beyond them. "Mais pousser les choses aux derniers termes ce n'est pas le fait des natures qui souffrent du scepticisme "

This gives us the clue Countess Tonska was suffering from scepticism as from a disease "Il est impossible", she says in another place, "de mettre plus de bonne volonté, plus de résolution, plus d'obstination même, et surtout de bonne foi, dans les efforts que je ne cesse d'accumuler pour me prendre aux choses de la vie Impossible ! tout me laisse froide et complètement, désespérément indifférente. Je n'ai jamais réussi à avoir d'amour pour personne ; " She is described as having "le coeur grand" in spite of all her faults and it is evident that she has the intelligence to understand what constitutes her inferiority. From the very beginning she impresses one as dissatisfied with herself. The story of her relationship with the sculptor Conrad Lanze is a profound psychological study. After causing him untold suffering she decides to devote herself to him and in the end she learns to love him, causing their mutual happiness The very gradual change in her is traced with infinite care and with great skill. Gobineau was fond of describing soul-struggles and of noting the changes that can take place in personalities. This is seen in the por-

trayal of the Countess Tonska as well as in the behaviour of Louis Laudon who, after ridding himself of the "rouille accumulée sur ses sentiments" joins his uncle, the marquis de Candeuil (Bullet) in his retreat at Wilna, thus prefiguring Philippe of *Sous l'Oeil des Barbares* (Barrès) and his "retraite méthodique et féconde" Gobineau was interested in the ego and its healthy development. On the one side he depicts the shallow person who has no real character because he is indistinguishable from the mass and on the other he holds up to our admiration individuals who are striving to realize themselves while doing their duty as members of a social group. In this novel Gobineau, following in the footsteps of Stendhal who had deeply influenced him, foreshadowed not only the "roman à thèse" of Bourget in its psychological aspect, but also the philosophical "roman de la vie intérieure" of Maurice Barrès. Louis Laudon is not exactly like any of the characters in Bourget's novels, but his essential traits are found in several. The following criticism of Jacques Lacretelle is difficult to understand: "Une fois créés ces caractères (those of *Les Pléiades*) changent peu, ils ne connaissent point de revirement. La seule figure qui n'a pas le même aspect à la fin du roman, où elle apparaît singulièrement fortifiée, est celle de Laudon." Another critic who has failed to note Gobineau's interest in psychological development is Bulwer Lytton.¹³ Sophie Tonska is a com-

¹³ Bulwer Lytton. *A Novelty in French Fiction* (The Fortnightly Review, September, 1874). "I have known three or four Countess Tonskas and can testify to the astonishing accuracy of the portrait by Count Gobineau. He could not have understood them better if he had lived for years in that cavity which in other women is occupied by the heart, and in women of this type, by the restless and desperate efforts of the head to imagine the emotions of a heart that is missing. But the Countess Tonska of real life does not end by

plex character and one needs to read the story with great attention in order to understand her

Conrad Lanze, the sculptor, is the sensitive artist with all his refinement and delicate impressionability. The author felt neither scorn nor any particular admiration for this type. Lanze was an individualist and not interested in the mass of mankind, he was quite ready to agree with Nore's conception of the "fils de roi." Lanze is the kind of a man to whom the emotion of love is liable to mean largely suffering. His story, the fascination exerted on him by Countess Tonska and the manner in which he gradually becomes her slave, is interestingly related. The following speech in which he defends his choice of Ossian as a subject for a statue is typical of him and at the same time throws light on the author's psychology and especially on his state of mind in the last decade of his life. He is conversing with his friend, Harriet Coxe. To her objection "Quoi! un homme de nuages" he replies "De nuages, sans doute, et de nuages de couchant! ne voyez-vous pas ce coeur malheureux, rempli de l'image des héros et des temps qui ne sont plus, rempli de piété pour un passé qui s'efface, poursuivant d'un regard triste et d'une affection douloureuse un soleil déjà pâli et qui va s'éteindre au sein des flots méchants d'une mer impitoyable? Ne lui trouvez-vous pas toute la noblesse, toute la grandeur

marrying, beneath her rank, a little German sculptor of mediocre genius, because he is pulingly devoted to her. At least, she may make such a marriage — for she is capable of every absurdity under heaven — but, having made it, she is sure to repent it the next day, and to be as miserable as before. Count Gobineau would perhaps reply to this objection that he has known a case in point. Probably. But if you undertake to draw a perfect circle and fail it is beside the point to say that there are imperfect circles in nature."

de l'invincible fidélité? Il aime et il perd tout, il aime et il va rester seul! Il aime et il n'oubliera jamais Il aime et il ne s'attachera jamais à ce qui triomphe! Il aime et il ne veut rien savoir des qualités, des vertus, des mérites, des grâces, des séductions de ce qui va régner, parce que le nouveau maître aura pris la place de celui qu'il a servi! Il aime enfin et il mourra aimant toujours!" Fidelity was at once our author's strength and weakness!

Gobineau called this novel his *Wilhelm Meister* since it was the medium through which he expressed his philosophy of life. It is probable that the author was influenced by Goethe's work. This philosophical novel suffers as does that of Goethe and others of a similar genre from a certain want of plasticity. Not all of the characters stand out convincingly as figures in real life. The style of this, his most subjective work, is extraordinary by its mixture of humor and irony with the most intense seriousness, the moods varying from friendly chattiness and exceeding benevolence to biting satire and misanthropy. We have spoken of the bitterness and discouragement which reflect the mood of the author in the last decade of his life. It is remarkable to note how some of the principal characters who are represented as superior men, are enslaved by the passion of love. Gobineau considered this the "faiblesse des âmes fortes". According to Prof. Schemann some of the principal characters represent people in the Count's acquaintance. Thus Laudon is supposed to be Rochechouart who had been Gobineau's attaché in Teheran and in Conrad Lanze are incorporated some of the traits of the German painter, Hermann Bohn, a friend of his youth. In draw-

ing the figure of the Englishman the author had in mind several of his English friends

Are the members of this "pléiade" really superior beings? Jacques de Lacretelle suggests¹⁴ that Gobineau had perhaps originally intended to portray really superior individuals, but was then hindered in this by his powers of observation and his ironical gift "Mais s'ils sortent du commun", writes Lacretelle, "par la vigueur et la vivacité de leur tempérament, s'ils brillent parmi la multitude, les Nore, les Harriet Coxe et même les Casimir Bullet ne sont pas des êtres supérieurs. Et une pléiade telle que celle qui s'est formée à Burbach disparaîtrait sans laisser sa trace dans l'esprit des hommes."

The difficulty, of course, lies in the definition of superiority. Clearly the author never meant to depict a society of geniuses. The following passage in *Terre-Neuve*, which we have quoted elsewhere, proves his conviction of relativity. "Ce n'est pas le théâtre où ils agissent ni les intérêts qu'ils remuent qui font les hommes grands, c'est uniquement le poids de domination qu'ils savent faire peser sur les choses, et le pâtre qui sait vouloir est dans son étroite sphère plus élevé qu'un potentat incertain de ses voies." For all his Nietzschean trend Gobineau's range of sympathies was very wide. Liliane Lanze, who is certainly not an extraordinary person, is included among the pléiades. "Liliane est passionnée pour son mari et ses enfants. Elle a tout ce qu'il lui faut, et un seul danger menace cette nature si délicate et si vive, c'est l'excès du bien et de la sécurité. Qu'elle s'endorme trop, et la Liliane que l'on a

¹⁴ *Europe*, 1er octobre, 1923. Jacques de Lacretelle, *Gobineau Romancier, Les Pléiades*.

connue dans ces pages disparaîtra peu à peu sous la ménagère épaissie, comme il arrive aux fées de se fondre dans le brouillard du marécage. Mais si elle continue comme elle est maintenant, pleine de dévouement pour ceux qu'elle aime, l'esprit ouvert aux grandes choses, pouvant admirer et hair, la petite femme de l'Officier obscur restera une des Pléiades et il faut espérer qu'il en sera ainsi." What the author dreaded more than anything else was modern ennui. Somewhere in *Les Pléiades* he says "Il est fâcheux pour les sentiments tragiques que les formes de la vie moderne ne s'y prêtent pas."

In some of its aspects Gobineau's "fils de roi" conception approaches the idealism of a Nietzsche who aspired to a higher humanity, but the author was always held back by his pessimistic philosophy, by the fatalistic determinism of his racial theory. He was, in our opinion, a moralist intent upon finding a worthy ideal of conduct for moderns. We refer the reader once more to our quotation which begins with the words "L'honnête homme, l'homme qui se sent une âme." We must attempt to trace Gobineau's conception of the superior individual. In his earlier works, in *Ternove* and in other novels of his youth, his interest in the man of action is very apparent, it is interesting to observe the difference in emphasis in this later ascetic period. Greatness in *Les Pléiades* is of a more spiritual kind. His attitude to love — we shall have occasion to contrast his conception of love with that of Stendhal — is very different from what it was in *Ternove*. But if the representative individuals of *Les Pléiades*, the "fils de roi", are more active in the world of ideas than in the world of men, which

fact mirrors the Count's state of mind at the time, the emphasis is nevertheless on the recognition of that mental health and stamina which enables men to withstand the danger of disintegration which lurks in intellectualism and scepticism. If the members of *Les Pléiades* do not act, one has the impression that it is usually for good reasons — they are at least capable of acting, for they have not lost their enthusiasm. They live intensely. Laudon and Countess Tonska learn to give themselves to life. For different reasons — in the former's case it is represented as chiefly an unfavorable environment and in the latter one feels that it is largely a question of temperament¹⁵, these people have failed to develop a wholesome emotional life. It is the fact of their learning to live that approximates the author to Barrès who believed that people should be both "ardent et clairvoyant" and whose characters deliberately cultivate enthusiasm by means of the "mécanique morale" of Loyola.

Gobineau's conception of the "homme supérieur" was neither the narcissism of a Chateaubriand or a Byron nor the personal lyricism of Alfred de Musset and other romantics. The "fils de roi" conception may in some of its aspects resemble the proud isolation of an Alfred de Vigny, but in its essence it has a different and a larger meaning.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Gobineau's unfavorable opinion of the Slav as expressed in the *Essais*.

¹⁶ In our Introduction we said that whether individualism is to be considered romantic or not was held to depend upon the degree of exaltation of the sentient faculties. We have endeavored to distinguish Gobineau also from J. J. Rousseau. Without a doubt, the morbid introspection of so many writers in the early part of the nineteenth century must be partially explained by the influence of Rousseau in whose *Confessions* and *Réveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire* the individual

The reader is invited to compare Gobineau's "fils de roi" with the main trend of Barrès' ideological trilogy. In the Introduction we related our author's endeavors to understand himself and to adjust his personal prerogatives to the rights of the collectivity, to the *Culte du Moi* of Barrès. Their respective quests of the self which they were equally anxious to place in the physical, racial and cultural environment, led to very different results. The authors passed through somewhat similar stages, but they may almost be said to have occurred in reverse order. The accentuation of Gobineau's individualism in his later years has a biographical explanation. He was never a fervent nationalist, though sufficiently patriotic in his youth. Barrès, on the other hand, was finally led by his cult of the ego to a fanatic nationalism.

In *Sous l'Oeil des Barbares*, that "bréviaire d'égoïsme" there occurs the following justification of the self: "M'étant proposé de mettre en roman la conception que peuvent se faire de l'univers les gens de notre époque décidés à penser par eux-mêmes et non pas à répéter des formules prises au cabinet de lecture, j'ai cru devoir commencer par une étude du Moi. . . Notre morale, notre religion, notre sentiment des nationalités sont choses écroulées, constatais-je, auxquelles nous ne pouvons emprunter de règles de vie, et, en attendant

soul had been given an unwonted importance and dignity. The parts played by Madame de Staël, Senancour and Benjamin Constant in the moulding of the romantic mentality have been studied by Canat, Lasserre and others.

Rene Canat, *Une forme du mal du siècle*, Paris, 1904.

Pierre Lasserre, *Le romantisme français*, Paris, 1907.

Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, New York and Boston, 1930.

que nos maîtres nous aient refait des certitudes, il convient que nous nous en tenions à la seule réalité, au Moi . . . Le premier point, c'était d'exister . . . Notre Moi, c'est la manière dont notre organisme réagit aux excitations du milieu et sous la contradiction des Barbares"¹⁷ And in the *Examen* of the same work he says. "*Le Culte du Moi* n'est pas de s'accepter tout entier Cette éthique où nous avons mis notre ardente et notre unique complaisance, réclame de ses servants un constant effort C'est une culture qui se fait par élaguements et par accroissements. nous avons d'abord à épurer notre Moi de toutes les parcelles étrangères que la vie continuellement y introduit, et puis à lui ajouter Quoi donc? Tout ce qui lui est identique, assimilable; parlons net tout ce qui se colle à lui quand il se livre sans réaction aux forces de son instinct" It is, according to Barrès, not enough for the Self to exist, it should be cultivated and acted upon by study and travel All this is quite in the spirit of Gobineau. On the whole it impresses one as a development of the idea beyond where Gobineau left it

In the *Cult of the Self* our author seems to stand midway between Stendhal and Barrès. Both had been preceded by the romantic Senancour whose psychological novel *Obermann* appeared in the year 1804. This work was not understood by its author's own generation, but became famous about a quarter of a century later. It is doubtful to what extent its true significance was appreciated at that time, but those suffering from the "mal du siècle" saw reflected in it their own moral inertia. Now it is of the greatest importance to distinguish

¹⁷ Compare our Introduction, p. 30, the passage commencing "Comment excuser des déguisés sans le savoir ."

both Gobineau and Barrès from the earlier writer Obermann also suffered from the disease of intellectualism which these writers combat, but if he had lost his capacity for action it was because he was forever preoccupied with the problem of ascertaining the meaning of life. Will, according to him, was dependent upon intelligence, he wished first of all to understand life and could feel no inclination to act until he had discovered a reason for acting

Gobineau and Barrès were fully as interested as their predecessor in understanding and cultivating the Self, but they took the fact of living and of self-expression for granted. Their concern was not to find a justification for living, but to discover the means of heightening life. One can see this in the characters encountered in their literary works. Stendhal and such successors as Gobineau and Barrès found modern life tame, especially because of its tendency to frustrate the differentiation normal to life.

In the minds of all these thinkers of the later nineteenth Century there runs the same theme. All were concerned with finding an ideal for modern man. All were aware of the disarray inevitably brought into a society which lacks faith. When men believe nothing firmly, when they have neither God nor any definite inspiring principle, they may for a considerable time continue prosperous, but they cannot be healthy either as individuals or as a group.

We have said that *Les Pléiades* deals with the psychology of love. Gobineau's attitude to love in this novel of his maturity is very different from what it had been in *Ternove*. There it had been hostile in that he

could not but regret the fact that Octave, that hero born to be a man of action, was kept from self-realization by his sentiment for Marguerite. That story ended on a tragic note. One senses the author's contempt for Octave. "Ce qui est hors de doute, c'est que Marguerite ne fut pas heureuse, et peut-on l'être à côté d'un pygmée pleurant d'avoir voulu jouer le rôle d'Alcide?" In *Ternove*, then, he attacked love as the enemy of the man of action.

His attitude to love in *Les Pléiades* was, as we have mentioned, very different. The following passage from that novel illustrates this and allows one to distinguish him clearly from Stendhal. "Le bonheur donne à l'âme l'équilibre; cette énergie manque là où il n'existe pas. Il comble le plus béant, le plus épouvantable de tous les gouffres, et ajoute à la puissance cette saveur vitale qui seule porte l'homme à agir. Faute de bonheur, l'inquiétude, le doute sont cramponnés sur leur esclave et lui ôtent, avec sa force, le désir même de se grandir."

How does Gobineau's conception of love, as we find it in *Les Pléiades*, differ from that of Henri Beyle? The strong resemblance which subsists despite certain striking differences, invites a comparison of the two authors. It will be recalled that Stendhal favored Southern energy and Southern passion, but the sentence in *De l'Amour* "vivre, c'est sentir la vie, c'est avoir des sensations fortes" would have appealed equally to Gobineau.

The love extolled in *Les Pléiades* is of the sort that Stendhal would have considered German. He writes in *De l'Amour*: "Ce sentiment est regardé par les Allemands comme une vertu, comme une émanation de la Divinité, comme quelque chose de mystique. Il n'est

pas vif, impétueux, jaloux, tyrannique comme dans le coeur d'une Italienne il est profond et ressemble à l'illumini-
 minisme; il y a mille lieues de là à l'Angleterre." In *Les Pléiades* Wilfrid Nore says to Harriet "C'est nous Harriet, nous seuls qui sentons réellement, qui savons ce que nous voulons, qui avons appris à souffrir, qui souffrons beaucoup, mais aussi nous qui pouvons être très heureux! Ne le pensez-vous pas? N'avons-nous pas la plénitude de nos âmes? ce qui est fragile et transitoire ne nous apparaît-il pas comme il l'est en effet, méprisable et ne sentons-nous pas en nous que si nous aimons ce n'est plus seulement parce que la nature qui est à l'entour le réclame de nos sens, mais parce que nos coeurs ont quelque chose de divin et de supérieur à la nature?" It is a kind of mysticism Does it not seem as though feeling love to be a virtue must imply a strong vital instinct?

The difference between the respective viewpoints of Gobineau and Stendhal in this question is more one of degree than of kind. Fabrice del Dongo in *La Chartreuse de Parme* is at one time in despair because of his fear that he will never know the "partie noble et intellectuelle de l'amour". A curious passage in *De l'Amour* helps one to understand Stendhal's viewpoint. "Les gens du Nord ont peu de vie voyez la lenteur de leurs mouvements. Le *dolce far niente* des Italiens, c'est le plaisir de jouir des émotions de l'âme, mollement étendu sur un divan, plaisir impossible si l'on court toute la journée à cheval ou dans un droski, comme l'Anglais ou le Russe. Ces gens mourraient d'ennui sur un divan Il n'y a rien à regarder dans leurs âmes." Gobineau favored the man of action. His was, according to Stendhal's definition, a northern temperament.

Les Pléiades must surprise many readers since its viewpoint seems, especially at first sight, to differ profoundly from that of *Akrivie Phrangopoulo*. In that nouvelle Gobineau manifested an admiration for simplicity which seemed to imply a distrust of individualism and a respect for tradition not easy to differentiate from the position of Maurice Barrès. We have said that in *Akrivie* the author idealized one type of womanhood and in Harriet Coxe another. The artist's enthusiasm for the simple maiden of Naxos should not be mistaken for the philosopher's view of life. Some further quotations will serve to clarify the difference between the two thinkers.

Gobineau's acute social sense makes him appear to be very close to Barrès. In his *Troisième République*, he inveighed against "la France factice créée par la centralisation" and against the political influence wielded in the capital by adventurers and others who were intellectually uprooted. He refers to this type as "ce déraciné". This passage resembles another, equally patriotic, in the *Revue Provinciale* which we quote in the preceding chapter. These passages are, however, somewhat misleading. Gobineau was never a really fervent nationalist, though some of his writings, especially those of his youth, show a patriotic spirit.

It seems opportune to insert as a complement here a quotation from *Ottar Jarl* to show wherein he diverges from Barrès. "Enfin, perpétuellement préoccupé de sa personnalité (it is a question of the Aryan warrior) et de ce qui s'y rapporte d'une façon directe, il n'est pas matériellement patriote, et n'éprouve pas la passion du ciel, du sol, du lieu où il est né. Il s'attache aux êtres qu'il a toujours connus, et le fait avec amour et fidé-

lité; mais aux choses, point, et il change de province et de climat sans difficulté C'est là une des clefs du caractère chevaleresque au moyen âge et le motif de l'indifférence avec laquelle l'Anglo-Saxon d'Amérique, tout en aimant son pays, quitte aisément sa contrée natale, et, de même, vend ou échange le terrain qu'il a reçu de son père Indifférent pour le génie des lieux, l'Arian Germain l'est aussi pour les nationalités, et ne leur porte d'amour ou de haine que suivant les rapports que ces milieux inévitables entretiennent avec sa personne " This circumscribes the passages in *La Troisième République* and *La Revue Provinciale* It prevents us from carrying the analogy with Barrès too far

It is evident that Gobineau made far less of patriotism and in particular of the cult of the soil, which would indeed have been impossible to reconcile with his racial theory The contradiction between the two passages is, however, more apparent than real Without being extremely patriotic he would have welcomed public leaders in the capital with more understanding of the character of the different provinces and with more sympathy towards their respective needs. Although the passage just quoted concerns a certain human type, the "guerrier aryen", it can nevertheless be said to apply to the Count's philosophy as a whole. He admired intellectual independence, but esteemed especially those individuals who were in addition public-spirited and able to combine with it a measure of patriotic, or to be exact, regional responsibility He was like Barrès a convinced regionalist and traditionalist

His cult of the past was less extreme than that of the representative French nationalists of today, but he

was no less than Taine and Barrès interested in the old communal and municipal liberties of the provinces threatened by Parisian bureaucracy, and concerned with the preservation of the traditions of the different regions

The sense of *Ottar Jarl* which treats of the Aryan family seems to accord with Barrès' idea that the individual is a mere link in the chain of the generations, but this should not deceive one as to the fundamental difference. The physiologically inherited traits were the important thing to Gobineau. Locality, where people lived and with whom they were associated otherwise than by ties of blood, were accessories. His sense of cohesion was neither with the soil nor with the landscape, but with the Aryan race. Thus, curiously enough, it was his race-mysticism that saved him from the narrowness of a Barrès. Gobineau believed in defending regional traditions since, in his opinion, progress was impossible without continuity, but for superior minds he reserved the privilege of transcending provincial and national boundaries.

Gobineau has given the clearest expression to the idea of the master-mortality in "Savonarole", the first part of his "*Scènes Historiques de la Renaissance*". It is the most Nietzschean passage in Gobineau. Pope Alexander VI is justifying his conduct (he is responsible for the murder of her husband Alphonse) to Lucrecia Borgia, duchess of Bisaglia " . . . Vous allez ainsi, Lucrèce, diriger mes Etats, l'Eglise et le monde. Je vous sais digne de comprendre la valeur d'une pareille tâche. Croyez-moi. Renoncez à des pleurs indignes de vous, par cela seul qu'ils sont inutiles. Songez à la gloire de votre maison, à l'avenir de nos établissements,

et que toute considération disparaisse devant une ambition si utile. Sachez désormais que pour ces sortes de personnes que la destinée appelle à dominer sur les autres, les règles ordinaires de la vie se renversent et le devoir devient tout différent. Le bien, le mal, se transportent ailleurs, plus haut, dans un autre milieu, et les mérites qui se peuvent approuver dans une femme ordinaire deviendraient chez vous des vices, par cela seul qu'ils ne seraient que des causes d'achoppement, de ruine. Or, la grande loi du monde, ce n'est pas de faire ceci ou cela, d'éviter ce point ou de courir à tel autre, c'est de vivre, de grandir et de développer ce qu'on a en soi de plus énergique et de plus grand, de telle sorte que d'une sphère quelconque on sache toujours s'efforcer de passer dans une plus large, plus aérée, plus haute. Ne l'oubliez pas. Marchez droit devant vous. Ne faites que ce qui vous plaît, en tant que cela vous sert. Abandonnez aux petits esprits, à la plèbe des subordonnés, les langueurs et les scrupules. . .” These were words to put into the mouth of this pope; it is doubtful to what extent the author meant these principles to apply as general principles of conduct.

Of this work which was written also in the Stockholm period, in 1876, Edouard Schuré in *Gobineau et le génie de la Renaissance (Précurseurs et Révoltés)* speaks as follows: “Ici nulle théorie, mais la vivante évocation d'une des grandes époques de l'histoire avec quelques visions de poète. Si ce livre n'est pas un drame selon les lois du Théâtre, c'est une oeuvre unique en son genre, le tableau complet et vivant d'une des plus grandes périodes de l'histoire, le miracle d'un devin et d'un poète — en un mot, une création de génie.”

La Renaissance has been looked upon by some as a palinode. It is certain that the racial idea is very much in the background, but there is nothing in this work of Gobineau the artist that contradicts his theory. The theorist probably had no part in the work, but, in portraying the greatness of that epoch, the author could quite conceivably have been thinking of the Aryan blood remaining in the Italian peninsula.¹⁸ M. Schuré has given us an able study. Gobineau's *Renaissance*, is, in his view, a valuable corrective to the materialistic philosophy of Hippolyte Taine for whom "vice and virtue are natural products like sugar and vitriol." He praises Gobineau for giving us of that period a picture in which morality and religion, politics and art are each apportioned their share and are seen in the right perspective. The great individuals come to their own. The work could be compared to a great mural fresco.

Michel-Angelo and Vittoria Colonna are given a prominent place in the drama and rightly, for these two "added to the incomplete principle of *renascence by art* that of *regeneration by the soul*." What, indeed, had been the aim of the Renaissance? Its invention of humanism and hellenism had been accompanied by grave errors. "La Renaissance crut pouvoir appliquer l'art et la beauté, comme un vêtement de luxe, sur sa vie féroce et corrompue pour se rendre forte et belle. De là ces

¹⁸ This seems to be corroborated by a passage in the article *Ce qui se passe en Asie*, page 24 (published with another essay *L'Instinct Révolutionnaire en France* in the *Cahiers Libres*, 57 Avenue Malakoff, Paris, 1928) where Gobineau says "L'Italie a dû aux Normands de Sicile, de pouvoir tendre les bras aux Hohenstauffen et à ces Normands elle a dû son éclat et sa grandeur, . . . C'est au sang germanique et rien qu'au sang germanique, que le grand receptacle des nations voyageuses a dû sa prospérité." We do not reproduce the entire passage. These two essays did not appear in print in the author's life-time.

tyrans platoniciens, ces condottières dilettantes, ces prélats érotiques, ces peintres athées de la Vierge et du Christ, ces humanistes, valets de princes criminels, ne parlant que de Tite-Live et de Plutarque, déclamant sur Brutus et Caton. De là enfin la banqueroute morale, sociale et politique de cette civilisation, où un faux hellénisme recouvrait un christianisme hypocrite” Michel-Ange and Vittoria Colonna were exceptional individuals By their “conscious and active faith in the immortal principle of the soul, in its infinite powers” they rose above their environment and transformed themselves “Ils se renouvelèrent de fond en comble par l’effluve mystérieux de la vie intérieure, par la puissance du sentiment et de la volonté”

We have, in another chapter, spoken of the similarity in spirit between some of the writings of Gobineau and those of André Gide and Joseph Conrad Count de Gobineau resembled the novelist Conrad in his ideas and attitude to life, in the themes he chose for literary expression and at times even in his technique. Both were aristocrats. It may be said that to some extent Conrad did for the savage East what Gobineau had done for the civilized East Both understood Orientals In a short story entitled *The Return* Conrad expressed, as Gobineau had in *Les Pléiades*, the theme of Bordeaux’ *Peur de Vivre* Other stories in that collection entitled *Tales of Unrest* recall some of the stories in Gobineau’s *Nouvelles Asiatiques*. We give here two parallel passages, one taken from *Les Pléiades* and the other from Conrad’s *The Return* in order to illustrate the similarity between them.

Les Pléiades

Livre II, Chapitre 6, page 178.

The Gennevilliers Couple

"Dans le monde on l'estimait; son nom appelait naturellement l'éloge. On n'aime guère, nulle part, les tempéraments fougueux, amoureux fous de la vérité, qui la cherchent dans des chemins peu battus. De tels caractères ont l'air de croire et de faire entendre que les lieux communs ne les contentent pas; ils blessent les amours-propres. Gennevilliers ne blessait personne. . . . Sa femme éprouvait pour lui une sympathie affectueuse. Comme il soutenait constamment et en bons termes les opinions incontestées dans le milieu où il vivait, elle était persuadée de sa valeur et en était fière. . . . Mais on se tromperait si l'on allait croire qu'il existât ici de l'amour. Jamais rien de semblable ne s'était montré chez eux, ni avant ni depuis leur mariage. Ils avaient associé leurs fortunes et leurs situations d'un plein consentement et sur l'avis et l'incitation des deux familles. Ils auraient eu grand tort de s'en repentir et s'en gardaient bien;

The Return

by Joseph Conrad, page 120. (Tales of Unrest)

Alvan Hervey and his wife.

"He considered himself well connected, well educated and intelligent. Who does not? But his connections, education and intelligence were strictly on a par with those of the men with whom he did business or amused himself. He had married five years ago. At the time all his acquaintances had said he was very much in love, and he had said so himself, frankly, because it is very well understood that every man falls in love once in his life — unless his wife dies, when it may be quite praiseworthy to fall in love again. The girl was healthy, tall, fair, and in his opinion was well connected, well educated and intelligent. She was also intensely bored with her home where, as if packed in a tight box, her individuality — of which she was very conscious — had no play. She strode like a grenadier, was strong and upright like an obelisk, had a beautiful face, a candid brow, pure eyes, and not a thought of her own in her head. . . .

toutes les combinaisons pré-vues s'étaient jusqu'alors admirablement réalisées. Gennevilliers avait hérité d'un oncle et Lucie d'une tante, et de belles successions se préparaient encore des deux côtés sans encombre probable. Les deux époux ne se gênaient pas, ils ne se taquinaient pas. Ils avaient les mêmes goûts, les plus inoffensifs du monde. Faire des visites, en recevoir, être à Paris l'hiver, l'été dans quelque-une de leurs terres, puis en voyage, ils n'imaginaient rien d'autre; dès lors, ils se trouvaient bien ensemble, et se préféraient mutuellement à tous les hommes et à toutes les femmes de leur connaissance, qui, d'ailleurs, vivaient exactement comme eux, renfermés dans les mêmes horizons. La passion, l'emportement, le trop, en quoi que ce fût, on ne savait ce que c'était dans cette vertueuse maison, et l'amour c'est le trop. En revanche, il faut aussi l'avouer, on s'ennuyait quelquefois. Ordinairement, on languissait; c'est le lot du bonheur moderne, et y rien changer serait impossible. Quelque chose de fort et de bruyant doit être

After their marriage they busied themselves, with marked success, in enlarging the circle of their acquaintance. Thirty people knew them by sight, twenty more with smiling demonstrations tolerated their occasional presence within hospitable thresholds, at least fifty others became aware of their existence. They moved in their enlarged world amongst perfectly delightful men and women who feared emotion, enthusiasm, or failure, more than fire, war, or mortal disease, who tolerated only the commonest formulas of commonest thoughts, and recognized only profitable facts. It was an extremely charming sphere, the abode of all the virtues, where nothing is realized and where all joys and sorrows are cautiously toned down into pleasures and annoyances. In that serene region, then, where noble sentiments are cultivated in sufficient profusion to conceal the pitiless materialism of thoughts and aspirations, Alvan Hervey and his wife spent five years of prudent bliss unclouded by any doubt as to the moral propriety of their existence. She, to give her individuality fair play, took up all

mêlé à la vie, si l'on veut qu'elle ne devienne pas atone. Quand les Romains avaient à se garder des Samnites, des Sabins, des Osques, des Umbres, et défendaient contre ces voisins conjurés, non leur vie, non leurs biens, mais l'existence nationale, mais les dieux de la patrie, certes, ni les Fabius, ni les Marcellus ni les Servilius, ni la gens Marcienne ne s'ennuyaient ni ne languissaient. Quand le moyen âge, se montant la tête allait jouer sang et fortune dans les déserts lointains de la côte d'Asie. Descendons encore; quand à défaut de l'amour de la cité, de la foi rayonnante, de l'ambition du premier rang, les générations déchues, mais non complètement éternuées, se laissèrent rouler dans les divertissements maculés et les espérances folles du dernier siècle, il y eut de la violence, force expirante, à ces excès de soupers, à ces turbulences philosophiques, mais, de nos jours, les riches n'ont plus rien à vouloir; ils peuvent courtiser à leur gré les vanités de situation; l'orgueil de caste est trop haut

manner of philanthropic work and became a member of various rescuing and reforming societies patronized by and presided over by ladies of title. He took an active interest in politics; and having met quite by chance a literary man—who nevertheless was related to an earl—he was induced to finance a moribund society paper. It was a semi-political, and wholly scandalous publication, redeemed by excessive dulness, and as it was utterly faithless, as it contained no new thought, as it never by any chance had a flash of wit, satire, or indignation in its pages, he judged it respectable enough, at first sight. Afterwards, when it paid, he promptly perceived that upon the whole it was a virtuous undertaking . . . Thus Alvan Hervey and his wife for five prosperous years lived by the side of one another. In time they came to know each other sufficiently well for all the practical purposes of such an existence, but they were no more capable of real intimacy than two animals feeding at the same manger, under the same roof, in a luxurious stable. His long-

placé pour leur petite taille; ils n'ont point de fanatisme religieux, ils sont trop honnêtes gens pour l'ambition échevelée, trop justement timorés pour la débauche, ce n'est pas de la passion que de craindre périodiquement la torche allumée de la canaille; ils se remuent un peu entre le tapissier, la lingère, le fabricant de voitures, la marchande de modes, payent des notes et s'ennuient. Il n'y a pas de théorie, si spiritualiste qu'elle soit, qui puisse les tirer de là." . . . " . . . Comme les femmes ont un sentiment plus délicat que leurs époux, elles subissent plus complètement aussi les conséquences de cette situation. Lucie s'ennuyait donc spécialement, et, sans y rien comprendre, souffrait du vide dans lequel elle était plongée. Elle n'éprouvait d'enthousiasme pour rien et n'admettait guère un pareil état de l'âme."

ing was appeased and became a habit; and she had her desire — the desire to get away from under the paternal roof, to assert her individuality, to move in her own set (so much smarter than the parental one); to have a home of her own, and her own share of the world's respect, envy and applause. They understood each other warily, tacitly, like a pair of cautious conspirators in a profitable plot; because they were both unable to look at a fact, a sentiment, or a belief, otherwise than in the light of their own dignity, of their own glorification, of their own advantage. They skimmed over the surface of life hand in hand, in a pure and frosty atmosphere — like two skillful skaters cutting figures on thick ice for the admiration of the beholders, and disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark; the stream of life, profound and unfrozen."

It is clear that the aim of the two authors was similar.

Gobineau was, in our opinion, a moralist in search of a worthy ideal of conduct for moderns. He was concerned with the health and vitality of individuals as well as of the social group. The ultimate value of Maurice

Barrès' narrow nationalistic idea, from which the Count was preserved through his race-mysticism, may be doubted since nationality, as we know it, may be relatively ephemeral. For all his inconsistencies and his regrettable pessimism there is in Gobineau's work an element which could be characterized as forward-looking and in line with the modern spirit and modern problems. Before Barrès he was interested in the "moi qui ne subit pas", that is to say, in a healthy and thoroughly sound individualism.

CONCLUSION

Aside from the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* and its supplement dealing with language we have traced in Count de Gobineau's work two main currents of vitalism. On the one hand we found an individualism which showed, so to speak, before Nietzsche a Nietzschean trend and on the other, in his traditionalism and regionalism, a social vitalism. These two tendencies are obviously contradictory: one is reminded of Octave de Ternove, his creation, who is described as being "pétri d'éléments multiples".

In his social vitalism Gobineau stood at a considerable distance from both De Maistre and Savigny, without ever becoming a nationalist: he may be said to have approached in some of its aspects the Philosophy of Maurice Barrès.¹

Gobineau, whose objectivity in the *nouvelle* and in his books on travel has been so much admired, was in his individualism aggressively subjective; he there foreshadowed the Personalism or Perspectivism of Frederic Nietzsche and could, in fact, be considered a precursor of various forms of pragmatism. Like Bergson, from whom his racial determinism rigidly distinguishes him, he believed in intuition.²

Our author seems to stand midway between Stendhal and Nietzsche. Like Mérimée and Stendhal he worshipped the man of action, extolling above everything else energy and strength of character. Paradoxically, in one

¹ Gaulois, 13 juin, 1907. Maurice Barrès in an article entitled *Un nouveau livre de Gobineau* (*La Troisième République* . .) shows his appreciation of Gobineau.

² This is apparent, for example, in *Akrivie Phrangopoulo*.

gifted as he was, he always found artistic or intellectual excellence a little suspect.³ We recall his admiration for the Condottieri of sixteenth Century Italy. Notwithstanding the pessimism and despair expressed in his work on the races the author was a voluntarist and this astonishing fact could with difficulty be explained otherwise than by a strong vital instinct. We saw that although Gobineau was led to substitute an individual hierarchy for his original ethnic one, the concept of race never ceased to dominate his thought.

In the *Essai* which vigorously denounced the folly of the "égalitaires", we have his strongest attack on eighteenth Century rationalism whose abstract notion of man he contemned. The vitalism of this work which compares societies to biological organisms, which attributes to each race a special instinct and sees ethics as a part of Natural History, which indeed inclines to perceive everything in terms of biological processes, is sufficiently apparent. A further corroboration of our thesis is furnished by his philosophical essay on language, the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* which is clearly vitalistic. This essay contains an interesting theory of truth in advancing which the author borrowed a concept from biology.

Both in History and Religion Gobineau tended to be pragmatic. The historian defended his impressionistic method in the *Histoire des Perses*, we mentioned his strictures on the dispassionate use of the intellect. While

³ Thus on June 10th, 1862 he writes to his elder daughter "Quant aux Grecs, je vous les abandonne tous ensemble et en masse, sauf Pythagore. Le reste, ce sont des artistes et rien de plus, ce qui n'est pas assez" (Quoted by Ludwig Schemann in *Quellen zum Leben Gobineau's*, Vol II, p. 367)

subjectivism seemed to predominate, we did not claim consistency for him; it is evident that he wavered more or less, his position at any time depending upon whether the "Instinct Vital" or the "Instinct de Connaissance" was in the ascendant

It is perhaps in his attitude to History and Religion that he most clearly revealed himself. We posited that our author's work might find an explanation in an overpowering feeling of the vanity or transitoriness of all things and in a compensating search for some permanent principle, in a striving for a hold in the perpetual flux of phenomena. Gobineau admired in societies, civilizations and state-systems the capacity to endure. He realized that here as elsewhere it could only be a question of relative permanence " . . . il n'est pas dans la nature d'aucun fait de durer à perpétuité " " . . . il faut reconnaître comme une vérité de dogme que toute théorie politique, existant ou en puissance d'exister, apporte avec elle un germe de réalisation. Il est plus que probable qu'elle sera essayée et pour cette raison tout système pratique contient en lui un germe grossissant de mort rapide et il est certain qu'il va tomber " ⁴

The Latin peoples were, in his opinion, the least well endowed to live. In France, especially, political régimes were liable to this ephemeral character he deprecated. It is there he saw best exemplified and in all parties without exception the "instinct révolutionnaire". "Quel que soit le motif ou le prétexte, l'instinct est le même, c'est de détruire de fond en comble."

⁴ These quotations and the following one are taken from *L'Instinct Révolutionnaire en France* (See *Ce qui se passe en Asie*). Cahiers Libres, Paris, 1928

Count de Gobineau's interpretations of French History resembled those of Hippolyte Taine in the *Origines de la France Contemporaine*. Both deplored the progressive weakening of local autonomy in the provinces due to centralization. In their eyes the French Revolution had merely continued this process, serving but to make the tyranny of the state the more effectual.

Our author's religion was rather intricate and many factors must be taken into account if one wishes to understand it. Students of Gobineau owe much in this as in other matters to the intelligent and sympathetic study of his German biographer, Ludwig Schemann. There is probably some truth in the latter's opinion that the author had two religions, one for himself and another that he was willing to reveal to the public, but this tends to simplify the matter unduly. In religion as in other questions there were conflicts in his mind; his religion consisted of necessity in a compromise or rather in a series of compromises between conflicting tendencies.

One should remember, in the first place, that Gobineau was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith which made a great appeal to the child's sensibility and imagination. There remained traces of this influence to the end in spite of all the vicissitudes of a life-time of thought. Owing to the devotion of his sister Caroline, the Abbess of Solesmes, with whom he kept up an interesting if, at times, difficult correspondence, he continued some degree of contact with Roman Catholic thought and feeling. For all he had said in the *Essai* he came in his maturity to appreciate the cultural significance of Roman Catholicism. Both in the first part of the *Histoire d'Ottar Jarl* and in the Introduction to

Savonarola (La Fleur d'Or) he showed how well he understood the rôle played in the Middle Ages by the monks and the bishops and their importance for European culture. Professor Schemann quotes the following passage from a letter he received from Jacques de Boisjoslin "Pour Toqueville, comme pour les Français d'alors, comme aussi bien pour Bossuet ou Voltaire, une religion était un dogme à croire ou à ne pas croire, une morale à suivre ou à ne pas suivre. Pour Gobineau, une religion était l'efflorescence supérieure ou l'inspiration latente d'un ensemble d'institutions civilisatrices. Il avait dit dans l'*Essai*, que le Christianisme n'est point civilisateur, son domaine étant tout entier moral et individuel. Aussi se déclarait-il catholique, sans bien définir s'il était chrétien." What militated the most against his adherence to Christianity was his racial theory which could not possibly agree with a religion claiming universality. Not only the idea of a universal religion, but also Christian ethics were in reality in flagrant opposition to his vitalism. The *Essai* considered religion to be racial, religious inclinations reflected temperament "La religion se combine d'après l'état ethnique." This, however, he supplemented by the significant statement: "Le catholicisme lui-même condescend à se plier, quant aux détails, aux instincts, aux idées, aux goûts de ses fidèles."

Now Gobineau felt himself to be an Aryan. He believed that he was descended from Scandinavian pirates — this he developed in *Ottar Jarl* — and went at times so far as to claim descent from Odin. It is clear, at any rate, that Christian humility and humanitarianism did not accord with his character. Certain passages in the *Histoire des Perses* and in *Ottar Jarl* prove his marked sympathy with the tendency of primitive Aryans to feel

the divinity as a part of themselves. It was his essential paganism that separated him from Richard Wagner with whom he had in common a love for Nordic peoples and sagas. In this connection it is interesting to learn from Frau Elisabeth Forster that her brother, Frederic Nietzsche, took a keen interest in the fact that Gobineau in a conversation with Wagner had shown a strong opposition to the spirit of *Parsifal*.⁵ To Cosima Wagner our author wrote on June 15th, 1881: "Dites au maître combien je lui suis attaché de coeur et d'âme et qu'il est le premier chrétien du 1er au 2e siècle que je retrouve mais. Bref, on reste ce qu'on est et je suis plus Germain qu'il ne consent à l'être. Les héros étaient médiocres sur l'humanité et je n'ai pas le courage de les en blâmer."

Gobineau's remarks on religion in his letters to his sister vary from an almost complete submission to Catholic doctrine to an independence of thought which could lead one to believe him a freethinker. Certainly the following statement in a missive bearing the date of April 15th, 1874 could give one pause in a writer who wished to be regarded as a "bon catholique". "Je n'ai aucune espèce de tentation ni d'envie de m'adresser à Dieu, je dis au Dieu conçu à la manière chrétienne, plus qu'au Dieu conçu à la manière bouddhiste, plus qu'à Odin, plus qu'à Jupiter maximus optimus. Ce sont des genres de conception que je suis porté à croire toutes vraies, toutes fausses, suivant les temps, suivant les lieux."

Gobineau inclined to pragmatism, he was interested in all religions and studied more than one deeply and sympathetically. It is certain that he deemed illu-

⁵ *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches*, Volume II, page 886

sion necessary to life and that he estimated any faith, be it never so inept, preferable to living entirely without faith ⁶

Gobineau was not an atheist. With his panpsychism he came close to a sort of pantheism. He believed strongly in the immortality of the soul and showed to the end of his days the mentality of one who has been reared as a Roman Catholic. As a man of tradition and as a historian with the viewpoint of a social vitalist, he was drawn to espouse the cause of the Church whose usefulness as a social organism, as a force making for discipline, he recognized. Conservatism and the hatred he bore his epoch appear, in the end, to have been of paramount importance. Thus he wrote his sister on February 13th, 1874. "Tu as raison, je n'ai jamais compté parmi les libres penseurs et ne le serai jamais. Au contraire, je serai toujours compté parmi les catholiques et, au besoin, je communierais en grande pompe au haut des tours Notre Dame pour qu'on le vit mieux. Sais-tu pourquoi? C'est que je hais ce temps-ci et je ferai l'impossible pour ne pas être avec lui."

When Alexis de Toqueville, pointing out the obvious inconsistencies between the teachings of the *Essai* and the doctrines of the Church, ventured to impugn our author's orthodoxy, he defended himself with vigour and eloquence, though hardly convincingly since he neglected to discuss the vexing question of inequality. There is, at any rate, no doubt that he wished to be considered a sincere Roman Catholic. "Suis-je homme à flatter une opinion qui me semblerait fausse? Est-ce

⁶ *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L'Asie Centrale*, page 193. See passage beginning "Toutes les religions sont sujettes à donner . . ." Quoted in Chapter III, p. 138 of the present work.

que cela me ressemble? . Non, si je dis que je suis catholique, c'est que je le suis Dans la dernière perfection? Assurément non, et je le regrette, et je désire que cela soit un jour, quand je dis catholique, c'est catholique tout à fait, coeur et intelligence, et si je croyais comme vous que mes opinions historiques y font disparate, je les abandonnerais à l'instant Sans doute, j'ai été philosophe, hégélien, athée Je n'ai jamais eu peur d'aller au bout des choses C'est par cette porte finale que je suis sorti des doctrines qui ouvrent sur le vide pour rentrer dans celles qui ont une valeur et une densité . " One realizes, especially after reading this reply to de Toqueville dated November 29th, 1856 that Gobineau's attitude in religion was more than an intellectual pragmatism An instinct seems to have preserved him from that nihilism to which his thought, if followed to its logical conclusion, would necessarily have brought him ⁷

Gobineau is a link between early romantic philosophy, between that represented, for instance, by Schelling who opposed *Anschauung* (intuition) to *Verstand* (intellect) and later vitalists such as William James, Nietzsche and Bergson These latter three were all, in varying degrees, pragmatists James and Bergson believed in the freedom of the will. Clearly our author, with his racial determinism, is closer to Nietzsche

Aside from Schelling, it was Tieck, Novalis,⁸

⁷ Ludwig Schemann has quoted these passages in *Quellen zum Leben Gobineau's* (See Gobineau's *Stellung zu Religion, Christentum und Kirche*)

⁸ As a young man Gobineau read Novalis with enthusiasm, as we know from early letters to his sister which have been preserved in the Gobineau collection at Strasbourg His faith in intuition may derive partly from this source

Holderlin and the Schlegels who, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth Centuries did the most to spread romantic ideas. The influence of this German center must be reckoned as more considerable than that of Jean Jacques Rousseau. These romantics generalized vitalistic principles, they were enemies of the "Aufklärung," believing in intuition and glorifying life and spontaneity, which they opposed to cold intelligence. Eighteenth Century rationalism was the chief object of their attack. It is manifest that our author had much in common with them, but the analogy should not be carried too far. The ideas of Tieck and Novalis as to the spontaneity of genius were quite foreign to him. Gobineau believed in classical restraint and discipline and reacted strongly against the "lyrisme personnel" of the romantics. His position both as a philosopher and as a literary theorist and critic was original and the word vitalism seems most adequately to describe his tendencies.

It is important to distinguish Gobineau from that other influential precursor, J. J. Rousseau, to whom must be assigned a place in the vitalistic current of thought. We contrasted their respective types of individualism. In view of the fact that these two thinkers were both, though in differing degrees, vitalistic, both anti-intellectual and hostile to urban civilization, it is curious that they should, after all, have stood at opposite poles from each other. Rousseau must, despite his rationalism, be counted among the vitalists, not only for his faith in instinct, but because of the importance he attached to the individual soul.

We observed in Count de Gobineau fully as much as in the eighteenth Century enthusiast for the "homme

de la nature" a preoccupation with the question of the right relation of the individual to the state. Both manifested in different ways the psychology of revolt. One senses in Gobineau's Aryanism which limits the capacity for freedom to this one race, that it may betray a subconscious feeling that government is chiefly for others. Nevertheless we found in the theme of the ideal Aryan greater realism than in Rousseau's notion of the "natural man". For it was Gobineau who said "L'homme est l' animal méchant par excellence". The following passages of the *Essai*⁹ develop further the theme of the moral superiority of Aryans. "Celle des Aryans ne réside pas dans un développement exceptionnel et constant des qualités morales, elle existe dans une plus grande provision des principes d'où ces qualités découlent". "L'Aryan est donc supérieur aux autres hommes, principalement dans la mesure de son intelligence et de son énergie, et c'est par ces deux facultés que, lorsqu'il parvient à vaincre ses passions et ses besoins matériels, il lui est également donné d'arriver à une moralité infiniment plus haute, bien que, dans le cours ordinaire des choses, on puisse relever chez lui tout autant d'actes répréhensibles que chez les individus des deux autres espèces inférieures."

René Berthelot¹⁰ has traced the theory of instinct from Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Rousseau to Jacobi, Tieck and Novalis, it was easily recognizable in the utilitarian garb it assumed in the writings of Adam Smith and Thomas Reid. The romantic philosophers in Germany had this theory of instinct in common with the

⁹ *Essai sur l'Inégalité*, Volume II, page 363

¹⁰ René Berthelot *Un Romantisme Utilitaire* (Tome II, Paris, 1913), Troisième Partie, page 119

Scottish psychologists “ , nous voyons comment cette psychologie de l'instinct esthétique et moral a été l'une des origines de la philosophie romantique par ce qu'il y a en elle d'anti-intellectualiste et d'anti-utilitaire. Et nous touchons les points de contact qu'il y a entre la psychologie romantique et la psychologie écossaise, psychologies qui, sur d'autres points, apparaissent bien éloignées l'une de l'autre, puisque l'une d'elles se donne comme une apologie du sens commun, et que l'autre aboutit à une apothéose de l'art. Ce qui se retrouve dans la psychologie des romantiques et dans celles des Ecossais, chez Jacobi, Tieck ou Novalis et chez Adam Smith ou chez Reid, c'est l'opposition radicale entre la spontanéité de l'instinct, du sentiment interne immédiat et le raisonnement intellectuel ou le calcul utilitaire ”

Our author was closer to the Scottish theorists than to the German romantics. But it is clear that all, without exception, sponsored intuition or spontaneous instinct which they set over against the cold or utilitarian operations of reason. The Scottish philosophers maintained that each living species had its own particular instinct and that the instinct of man differed in nature as well as in degree from that of animals, M. Berthelot has pointed out how closely this resembles Bergson's distinction between animal instinct and human intuition.

Gobineau carried the idea beyond the point it had reached with the Scottish psychologists. According to his view, not only did each living species have an instinct of its own irreducible to that of any other, but each race within the human species was endowed, at least in its original pure state, with an instinct as definite. This is a far cry from the abstract notion of man entertained

by Jean Jacques Rousseau and from the rationalism of the "categorical imperative" of Immanuel Kant

In their respective ways both Gobineau and Rousseau were convinced that man had fallen from his primordial high estate, but while both writers were dissatisfied with their respective epochs and given to idealizing earlier ages, the styles of these two men, equally in revolt, were very different. An immense distance necessarily separated Rousseau with his plebeian philosophy and tranquil ideal from such an aristocrat as Count de Gobineau whose chief quarrel with the modern spirit was its lack of ardour.¹¹ Rousseau had rebelled against the abuses of the "ancien régime" and the artificiality of eighteenth Century society. The principal objects of our author's attack were eighteenth Century rationalism with its sequel the levelling-trend and modern scepticism and intellectual dilettantism.¹²

Gobineau's personality undoubtedly revealed, as we have stated, the disposition of the defeated nobility in a democratic age, one thinks of Baudelaire and Villiers de l'Isle Adam^{12a} and earlier still of Alfred de Vigny and Chateaubriand. As for his ideas of race, one may count among his intellectual ancestors Count de Boulainvilliers.

¹¹ Undoubtedly our author would have agreed with such an advocate of "the strenuous life" as President Theodore Roosevelt

¹² It is a curious coincidence that these two thinkers should have successively inhabited the Château de Trye near Gisors in Normandy. Jean Jacques Rousseau resided there one year (1767-1768) under the name of Renon as the guest of Prince Conti and the tower in which he wrote the second part of his *Confessions* still stands. Count de Gobineau acquired the castle in 1857. He lived there at the time of the Franco-Prussian War and was then Conseiller General for Chaumont en Vexin.

^{12a} The *Contes Cruels* are in their spirit related to tendencies in Gobineau's writings

Our author is an interesting personage of an age of transition; the appeal he makes to widely differing groups at the present time is astonishing. Adaptation was for him always a difficult thing, his was a restless soul, essentially a nature in conflict. There was inconsistency between his individualism and his traditionalism, his artistic temperament and his Aryan hero-ideal, between his paganism and his endeavors to be a good Roman Catholic, his love of France and French letters and his low estimate of Greco-Latin civilization. He never became completely reconciled to democracy which he knew to be inevitable.

There is some justification in the opinion of Maurice Lange who liked to refer to Gobineau as a "féodal" and an "émigré à l'intérieur" with rancour in his soul, but his medievalism has certainly been exaggerated. What is really important is that he was a modern with a message for moderns. This "féodal" attempted to adapt the ideals of a chivalrous age to his epoch.¹³ He conceived the possibility of a modern knighthood to extend to the intellectual sphere.

Gobineau with all his heart hated the prosy "Nous ne descendons pas du singe, mais nous y allons" he once said and one may gauge from this grim sarcasm and from other sayings the depth of his pessimism, and realize his poignant regret at the passing of human idealism. He regretted the "ardeur féodale" and the spirit of adventure and conquest of the age of explora-

¹³ In this connection see Gobineau's poem *Amadis* and the understanding preface by Countess de la Tour. Our author never quite forgave the great Cervantes for having excited laughter at the expense of a "fils de roi". See Bayreuther Blätter VII and Robert Dreyfus *La Vie et les Propheéties du Comte de Gobineau*, p. 25.

tion Modern life was despicably tame "Je prendrai les fléaux dans toute l'étendue vraie ou fausse qui leur est attribuée et je demanderai seulement si, au milieu des plus grands désastres, on est vraiment bien malheureux quand on est si vivace? Vit-on nulle part que le serf opprimé, le noble dépouillé, le roi captif aient jamais tourné de desespoir leur dernière arme contre eux-mêmes? Il semblerait que ce qui est plus vraiment à plaindre, ce sont les nations dégénérées et bâtardes qui, n'aimant rien, ne voulant rien, ne pouvant rien, ne sachant où se prendre au sein des accablants loisirs d'une civilisation qui décline, considèrent avec une morne indulgence le suicide ennuyé d'Apicius"¹⁴ Were men not happier then, after all, even if one considers their life in its worst aspects?

Our author was strongly under the illusion of human individuality What he admired so greatly in the Germanic freeman of the Middle Ages was his insistence on his "droit personnel" The passages in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, treating of Anglo-Saxon as distinguished from French ideas of honor, will serve to illustrate this viewpoint further "L'honneur avait été jadis chez les nations ariennes, était presque encore resté pour les Anglais et même pour les Allemands une théorie du devoir qui s'accordait bien avec la dignité du guerrier libre On peut même se demander si, sous ce mot d'honneur, le gentilhomme immédiat de l'Empire et le tenancier des Tudors ne comprenaient pas surtout la haute obligation de maintenir ses prérogatives personnelles au-dessus des plus puissantes attaques Dans tous les cas, il n'admettait pas qu'il en dût faire le sacri-

¹⁴ *Essai*, Volume II, page 481

fice à personne Le gentilhomme français fut, au contraire, sommé de reconnaître que les obligations strictes de l'honneur l'astreignaient à tout sacrifier à son roi, ses biens, sa liberté, ses membres, sa vie Dans un dévouement absolu consista pour lui l'idéal de sa qualité de noble, et, parce qu'il était noble, il n'y eut pas d'agression de la part de la royauté qui pût le relever, en stricte conscience, de cette abnégation sans bornes Cette doctrine, comme toutes celles qui s'élèvent à l'absolu, ne manquait certainement pas de beauté ni de grandeur Elle était embellie par le plus brillant courage; mais ce n'était réellement qu'un placage germanique sur des idées impériales, sa source, si l'on veut la rechercher à fond, n'était pas loin des inspirations sémitiques, et la noblesse française, en l'acceptant, devait à la fin tomber dans des habitudes bien voisines de la servilité"¹⁵

Like Maurice Barrès, and in a not dissimilar manner since it was accompanied by a keen social sense, Gobineau stood for an aggressive individualism Like the author of the *Trilogie du Moi* he commanded people to be themselves. The Count was, like many another thinker, distressed to observe the loss of values in so many spheres resulting from modern intellectual tendencies Relativistic thinking has become the fashion, but one may indeed have misgivings as to the ultimate effect of scepticism on men Gobineau saw that modern life, especially in urban centers, was not wholesome, that it

¹⁵ *Essai*, Volume II, page 483 See also on page 477, the passage commencing "La coutume féodale . . ." The question of the meaning of honor preoccupied Gobineau it is the central theme of *Ottar Jarl*, as Robert Dreyfus has shown. See his *Vie et Propheties du Comte de Gobineau*, page 317

tended to destroy the bases of moral life so that both the individual and the social body suffered. There are others besides him who have not been able to view the spineless dilettantism of a Renan or a St. Beuve with equanimity.¹⁶ In some respects Gobineau resembles such a modern American writer as Joseph Wood Krutch who is similarly tormented by the problem of decadence, and who appears to be equally impressed with the phenomenon of modern ennui and despair. In his philosophical novel *Les Pléiades* our author, in a sentence concerning "les sentiments tragiques" expresses a thought that corresponds closely to the point of view of Mr. Krutch in *The Tragic Fallacy*.¹⁷

We are all of us caught in the dilemma which Mr. Krutch designates as the "paradox of humanism." Shall we live biologically, as animals, or shall we, fostering individualism, live as completely as possible as human beings? To what extent is the dispassionate use of the intellect safe and healthy for the individual and for the society of which he is a part?

Gobineau was a relativist, but of a peculiar sort; his type of relativism resembled somewhat that of Mau-

¹⁶ The delicate question of Renan's supposed debt to Gobineau has been treated by Jacques de Lacretelle in the *Revue de la Semaine* (July 21st, 1922). Gobineau's accusation of plagiarism, which Schemann sustains, seems groundless in view of the fact, pointed out in this article, that Renan's *Origines du langage* which appeared in 1857 was but an amended and amplified reproduction of a study on the same subject that had been published in a periodical in the year 1848. The *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* was not published all at once: the first two volumes appeared in 1853 and the last two in 1855. What similarity there is between the two works may be explained by the fact that the authors wrote on related topics and nearly at the same time so that they could have used the same sources or documents.

¹⁷ *The Tragic Fallacy* is one of the chapters in *The Modern Temper* by J. W. Krutch. New York, 1929.

rice Barrès, in both cases it seems as though an attempt had been made to make relativistic thinking a healthy procedure. In each case the great command was "be yourself." For Gobineau the self was more than a fiction. He would not have been capable of speaking, like Jules de Gaultier, of "la fiction du moi." He wished the independent spirit of the medieval knight, or something like it, to inspire the life of even the intellectual.¹⁸

As a pragmatist our author did not regard illusions as necessarily weak; it would seem, indeed, that in order to be in a position to decide as to the value or justifiability of an illusion one would have to be acquainted with the person and his circumstances. Although the scientific spirit requires of its devotees a willingness to move from one hypothesis to another, is it not true that all of us, including the most scrupulous scientists, take something for granted as a basis upon which to live? Could it not be maintained that for many science itself becomes a kind of religion?

Gobineau must be said to have been insufficiently aware of the importance and meaning of modern economic trends. He had very little sympathy with modern industrialism. The *Voyage à Terre-Neuve* shows his horror of the narrow mercantile spirit of the inhabitants of New Foundland, a spirit he would have found equally characteristic of New England.

The author was wont to interpret everything racially, to the neglect of the important factor of environment. Certain passages of the *Essai* on the subject of

¹⁸ My article *Modern Knighthood* (*Unity*, Chicago, April 6th, 1925) defended a narrowly intellectualistic viewpoint rather different from the spirit of Gobineau.

Chinese and Celtic psychology are, in this connection, very interesting. The Celtic peoples, in Gobineau's opinion, represented a blend between the white and the yellow races, with predominancy of the former. Chinese civilization, on the other hand, the product of the yellow race, could not have come about without some admixture of Aryan blood. The Hindu, finally, was a composite of Aryan and negroid strains. It is interesting to compare a passage on the subject of China occurring in the first volume¹⁹ with the end of the third chapter of Book V where it is a question of the ancient Gauls.²⁰ Of the Chinese he writes "Si cette multitude jaune est paisible et soumise, c'est à la condition de rester, à tout jamais, privée des sentiments étrangers à la plus humble notion de l'utilité physique. Sa religion est un résumé de pratiques et de maximes qui rappellent fort bien ce que les moralistes genevois et leurs livres d'éducation se plaisent à recommander comme le *nec plus ultra* du bien, l'économie, la retenue, la prudence, l'art de gagner et de ne jamais perdre. La politesse chinoise n'est qu'une application de ces principes. C'est, pour me servir du mot anglais, un *cant* perpétuel, qui n'a nullement pour raison d'être, comme la courtoisie de notre moyen âge, cette noble bienveillance de l'homme libre envers ses égaux, cette déférence pleine de gravité envers ses supérieurs, cette affectueuse condescendance

¹⁹ *Essai sur l'Inégalité*, Volume I, page 482

²⁰ *Essai*, Volume II, page 180 (Book V, *Civilisation Européenne sémitisée*, Chapter III). Compare also Volume II, page 123 the passage. " . . la créature hindoue, suprême expression du génie arien mêlé au sang noir, et ceux (les égarements) de l'esprit chinois, type de la race jaune animée par une infusion blanche."

envers les inférieurs,²¹ ce n'est qu'un devoir social, qui, prenant sa source dans l'égoïsme le plus grossier, se traduit par une abjecte prosternation devant les supérieurs, un ridicule combat de cérémonies avec les égaux et une arrogance avec les inférieurs qui s'augmente dans la proportion où décroît le rang de ceux-ci. La politesse est ainsi plutôt une invention formaliste, pour tenir chacun à sa place, qu'une inspiration du coeur." By the "moralistes genevois" the author may have meant Jean Jacques Rousseau as well as the Calvinistic pastors. We have referred to the similarity of his reaction to Swiss democracy and respectability to the viewpoints of both André Gide and Joseph Conrad. In view of these quotations Gobineau's pragmatism might seem surprising, but pragmatism has appeared in many different forms. It has, for instance, been used by revolutionaries no less than by reactionaries. It is not necessarily prosaic.

In the following passage of the *Essai* Gobineau writes about the Gauls: "Les sens ni l'esprit n'y sont plus étonnés par aucune tendance au sublime. L'ambition humaine y est toujours insatiable, mais de petites choses. Ce qu'on y appelle *jour*, *être heureux*, se réduit aux proportions les plus immédiatement matérielles. Le commerce, l'industrie, les moyens de s'enrichir afin d'augmenter un bien-être physique réglé sur

²¹ Count de Gobineau seems to have lived up to this ideal. Among others we have the following testimony from his elder daughter, the Baroness Guldencrone (see L. Schemann, *Quellen und Untersuchungen*, Volume I, page 396): "Mon père était d'un caractère extrêmement gai, il parlait presque toujours sur un ton de plaisanterie; il était aussi aimable, aussi courtois dans l'intérieur de la famille qu'en présence d'étrangers. Je ne l'ai jamais vu sans façon. . . Pour ceux qui ne savaient pas la vaste étendue de ses connaissances et la profondeur de sa pensée, il avait l'apparence légère et superficielle d'un grand Seigneur du temps de Louis XV, rien n'est plus exact. Il en avait le physique élégant, les manières aristocratiques, l'extrême politesse. . ."

les facultés probables de consommation, ce sont là les sérieuses affaires de la variété blanche et jaune ”

Never was there a greater interest in the Orient than at the present time In view of the many endeavors to understand Eastern psychology and wherein it differs from the mentality of the West the following passage²² cannot fail to interest “Ainsi, profondément distinctes dans leur nature, les deux grandes variétés métisses ont été au-devant de destinées qui ne pouvaient pas l’être moins Ce qui s’appelle durée de force active, intensité de puissance, réalité d’action, la victoire, le royaume, devait nécessairement, rester un jour aux êtres qui, voyant d’une manière plus étroite, touchaient, par cela même, le positif et la réalité, qui, ne voulant que des conquêtes possibles et se conduisant par un calcul terre à terre, mais exact, mais précis, mais approprié rigoureusement à l’objet, ne pouvaient manquer de le saisir, tandis que leurs adversaires nourrissaient principalement leur esprit de bouffées d’exagérations et de non-sens . Pour les philosophes asiatiques, se soumettre au plus fort, ne pas contredire qui peut vous perdre, se contenter de rien pour braver en sécurité la mauvaise fortune, voilà la vraie sagesse Les penseurs de l’Occident ne donnent pas de telles leçons à leurs disciples Ils les engagent à savourer l’existence le mieux et le plus longtemps possible La haine de la pauvreté est le premier article de leur foi Le travail et l’activité en forment le second Se défier des entraînements du coeur et de la tête en est la maxime dominante. jour, le premier et le dernier mot ” This is interesting and not without significance for the understanding of the

²² *Essay*, Volume II, page 180.

Count's personality Here again one sees cause for a conflict, for during his life in Persia he had gained both insight and a sympathetic understanding for Oriental thought.²³

If we now recur to the various definitions of vitalism which we gave in our Introduction, it seems very apparent that Gobineau's philosophy was vitalistic, since it was opposed to mechanism²⁴ It must be admitted that as a determinist Gobineau was less vitalistic than Henri Bergson, the author of *Creative Evolution* But our author believed that "life had its origin and support in some principle that is neither material nor organic" For him chemical and mechanical processes were not sufficient in themselves to account for growth and evolution He believed in intuition and his panpsychism, for which we have evidence in his letter to his sister of October 20th, 1869,²⁵ is comparable to the hylozoism of Schelling Vitalism is relativistic, slighting general truth in favor of individual truths Gobineau was a pluralist, for one cannot be deceived by the monistic formula found in the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle*, he considered ideas to be expressions of race This may partially explain his pragmatism

German romantic theory, as we have said, owes much to certain scientific hypotheses of a vitalistic trend. These romantics and vitalists must acknowledge as ancestors the animism of G. E. Stahl and the vitalism of the school of Montpellier. They resembled the early

²³ See also the footnote on page 145 of Chapter III of the present work

²⁴ See Introduction, page 10 on Gobineau's panpsychism and in the footnote the definition of mechanism in the Funk and Wagnall's dictionary

²⁵ See our Introduction, page 10

vitalistic theorists in glorifying "life" which they saw as an unconscious spontaneity superior to mechanical necessity and finalistic reasoning and opposing it to cold intelligence. Gobineau could not have lived in his epoch without undergoing to some extent romantic influences.²⁶

We discerned vitalism in his opposition to eighteenth Century rationalism embodied in the *Essai*, in his theory of racial instinct, his cult of energy, his intuitionism and panpsychism, his anti-intellectualism, subjectivism and pragmatism, his theory of language and his theory of truth. His faith in immortality could be considered indicative of a strong vital instinct. The following fine passage in *La Fleur d'Or*²⁷ expresses the author's conviction of the immortality of everything spiritual: "Au sein de ce qui nous entoure comme en nous-mêmes, se maintient une continuelle antithèse entre ce qui semble et ce qui est. C'est pourquoi la mort de toute chose, au lieu d'être la fin de cette chose, n'est rien que le commencement de son appropriation à de nouveaux états. C'est une loi inviolable. Il en résulte la perma-

²⁶ While Gobineau's individualism could be related to romantic revolt, caution is to be recommended in the use of the term "romantic" to designate his philosophy as a whole. Romanticism does not adequately cover all of his tendencies. For one thing, his individualism was restrained and combined with a remarkable social sense, so that it is clearly differentiated both from the egotism of Stendhal and from the attitudes of such romantics as Chateaubriand and Byron. In the literary essays of his early period where he attacked the personal lyricism of the romantics, he showed a fine scorn for the "mal du siècle." The choice of the term vitalism to describe Count de Gobineau's viewpoint seems more than justified when one takes into account his pragmatism and other pre-Nietzschean tendencies and the vitalistic theories found in the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* and in his writings on social and historical subjects. See Chapter IV, p. 14 and footnote.

²⁷ Quoted by L. Schemann in his *Biographie*, Vol. II, p. 67, in a footnote.

nence de l'essence intelligente dans ce monde et la nature du rôle que cette essence y est venue jouer, c'est par elle que ce qui apparaît tient de ce qui fut et que le Présent renferme à la fois des parties appréciables du Passé et de l'Avenir "

Throughout his thinking life our author was in quest of a permanent principle. Successively he gave his faith to such concepts as Race, the Family and the Individual in all of which he sought the ideal. He never abandoned the racial idea which continued to be basic in his thought, but fortunately there was something to mitigate his pessimism. The favorite concept of the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* had been the "individual sporadic being". As we know from *Les Pléiades* his interest centered finally on the idea of an élite of superior individuals. To some extent the historian who had been gripped by the battle of the races, gave way to a psychologist who watched with fascination the ethnic struggle within the individual himself. One seems to read something like that between the lines in that interesting letter of Gobineau's to Count Prokesch von Osten which we quoted on the third page of Chapter IV. It would be a natural development since purity of race was clearly a matter of the past and the author's favorite Aryan was fighting a losing battle. As a component of the complex modern individual the racial factor continues to be of some importance.

There is vitalism in Gobineau's admiration for the man of action and in his conception of the "fils de roi" who conquers himself and, in a sense, prefigures the Nietzschean superman. There is in Gobineau more than

a hint of the distinction between master and slave morality²⁸ Vitalistic also was his sympathy with the "hardiesses" of Oriental thinkers so obviously irreconcilable with the rational discipline characterizing Western thought No less vitalistic was his marked weakness for Oriental impulsiveness he studied with the keenest delight the slavery of the Persians to the "premier mouvement" and one thinks of Stendhal and his "chers Italiens" Gobineau's ideal of love, which would have been classed by the latter with German mysticism, showed a remarkable capacity for illusion and could therefore be considered vitalistic.

The author was interested in the phenomenal diversity of life and his receptivity to Eastern influences during his sojourn in Persia was extraordinary; one should not, however, exaggerate the influence of Oriental mysticism In his poem *Béowulf* as well as in the *Mémoire sur diverses Manifestations de la Vie Individuelle* he expresses unmistakably his distaste for the Buddhist concept of Nirvana, he would not have been found among the adherents of Keyserling

In our third and fourth chapters we studied Count de Gobineau's vitalism in two important aspects his individualism on the one hand and on the other his social vitalism expressed in traditionalism and regionalism²⁹ In the former he resembled Nietzsche and in the latter he came, notwithstanding his comparative lack

²⁸ See the quotation from *La Renaissance*, Chapter IV, p. 211 of the present work

²⁹ These tendencies are obviously contradictory, our author was so much an individualist that he found it difficult even to identify himself with an aristocratic caste His sarcasm did not spare those who in his day represented French aristocracy

of patriotism, fairly close to some of the ideas of Maurice Barrès ³⁰

It is not without interest to compare Gobineau with Renan, who had an equally aristocratic viewpoint and who was also far from blind to the importance of the racial factor in History. A great difference between them was that Renan expected great things from an aristocracy of the intelligent and could hence be optimistic about the future. We quote from a letter of Renan to Gobineau dated June 26th, 1856,³¹ where he gives his opinion of the importance of race "Le fait de la race est immense à l'origine, mais il va toujours perdant de son importance, et quelquefois, comme en France, il arrive à s'effacer complètement. Est-ce là, absolument parlant, une décadence? Oui certes, au point de vue de la stabilité des institutions, de l'originalité des caractères, d'une certaine noblesse dont je tiens pour ma part le plus grand compte dans l'ensemble des choses humaines. Mais aussi que de compensations! Sans doute, si les éléments nobles mêlés au sang d'un peuple arrivaient à s'effacer complètement, alors ce serait une avilissante égalité, analogue à celle de certains états de l'Orient et, à quelques égards, de la Chine. Mais c'est qu'en réalité une très petite quantité de sang noble mise dans la circulation d'un peuple suffit pour l'ennoblir, au moins quant aux effets historiques. c'est ainsi que la France, nation si complètement tombée en rotture joue en réalité dans le monde le rôle d'un gentilhomme." This makes the difference between their respective viewpoints sufficiently clear.

³⁰ Edmund Burke, the Irish statesman and orator of the eighteenth Century has probably given the clearest expression of the theory of social vitalism.

³¹ Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, pp 54-57

Although Gobineau was scarcely a typical romantic, he may be said to have exhibited some of the characteristics of romantic revolt which has at different times and with different individuals, assumed different forms. In his traditionalism our author approached Barrès whom he resembled also in the difficulties he experienced in reconciling what he deemed the rights of the individual with collective interest. In the case of Barrès the victory was finally with a rather narrow nationalism. Gobineau, in his later years, developed a disdainful individualism which tended to cut him off from intellectual currents and other developments of his epoch. This individualism, however, foreshadowed Nietzsche's³²

What does this vitalistic tendency which so manifestly dominates Gobineau's work signify as to his personality? Our author, indeed, took the fact of living for granted, he was not, like Senancour, the author of *Obermann*, troubled with the problem of the meaning of life. He was quite willing to live without knowing any reason for living. But is not the fact that he was forever bent upon heightening life, significant? There is something in this preoccupation that arouses one's suspicions. Surely Mr J. W. Krutch would see in it a sign

³² The passages in Nietzsche most suggestive of a possible influence by Gobineau are found in the following works: *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, *Morgenröte*, *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, *Die Reinigung der Rasse*. In spite of the fact that Nietzsche did not name Gobineau, there is absolutely no doubt of his having been acquainted with his works and inspired by them. Frau Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche remembers having read the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* to her brother in one of the two winters, 1875-1876 or 1877-1878. See also A. Riehl *Fr. Nietzsche, Der Künstler und der Denker*, Dr. Kretzer, *Gobineau, Nietzsche, Chamberlain in Frankfurter Zeitung* of July 22nd, 1902. A. Drews *Nietzsche's Philosophie* (Heidelberg, 1904). L. Schemann *Gobineau's Rassenwerk*, pp. 157-158.

of lowered vitality Was not the intellectual career of a Nietzsche explicable on the grounds of nervous invalidism? Count de Gobineau showed, particularly in his later years, by abundant signs, that he lacked complete mental health He was what the French call "un grand nerveux" During most of his life he had been accustomed to great suffering, both mental and physical

The last years of his life the author spent in Rome, occupied chiefly with sculpture He had separated from his wife and younger daughter In Rome he had an interesting circle of friends and there his brilliancy as a conversationalist was appreciated³³ He was saddened and rather bitter, owing both to his failure to gain recognition and his ruined diplomatic career A telegram from Duke Decazes, then minister of Foreign Affairs, informed him in February, 1877 of his premature retirement He did not return to France, but left Stockholm for Rome In these last years he made occasional visits to the Wagners in Bayreuth and to the Countess de la Tour in Chaméane in Auvergne His health was not good The climate of Rome did not agree with him and he suffered in addition from a disease of the eyes When Gobineau died in Turin on October 13th, 1882 he was almost unknown In judging Gobineau's work one must take into consideration the scope of his influence on modern thought and whether this influence is likely to be enduring Since the author had influence in such varied directions one feels inclined to answer the question in the affirmative In his own country,

³³ Count de Gobineau's reputation as a charming society-man was an additional hindrance to recognition in literary or scientific circles. A lively sense of humor and, among intimates, an irrepressible gaiety and youthful spirit made the charm of his personality He kept this to the end

through his traditionalism and regionalism, he had a share in forming the mentality of the present nationalist group, paradoxical as this may seem. We endeavored to show³⁴ how very natural and inevitable is the refusal of these nationalists to recognize Gobineau. On the other hand, it is certain that our author was one of the thinkers who most profoundly affected the personality of Frederic Nietzsche and the import of this is incalculable. The importance of Nietzsche's message in the lives of the present generation on the European continent, in England and America is impossible to estimate. We approximated Gobineau to Barrès who, however, differed sufficiently from him owing to his cult of the soil. Paul Bourget, in his greater appreciation of the racial factor, came somewhat closer to the Count's philosophy. For good or for evil, Gobineau has increased racial consciousness and this, again, is not a small matter.

The question presents itself why was Count de Gobineau so little appreciated in his life-time and what accounts for the present Gobineau cult? This has spread from the Gobineau society at Freiburg,³⁵ founded in 1894 by Professor Schemann under the auspices of the Wagnerians, Philip von Eulenburg and Hans von Wolzogen, to France and to other countries. Our author owes his fame largely to Richard Wagner. In 1853 the Count's writings made but little stir and he was disavowed by such thinkers among his countrymen as had taken the trouble to study his ideas. His friend and patron Alexis de Toqueville was jarred by the pessimism and apparent

³⁴ See the admirable study of this question by Robert Dreyfus in *Vie et Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau*

³⁵ Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

fatalism of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*. Seventy years later Gobineau is accepted in intellectual circles as a great writer and many in France as well as in other countries appreciate his importance as an influential thinker. This phenomenon is comparable to the resuscitation of Henri Beyle (Stendhal).

It is true that in certain groups Gobineau is valued as a *littérateur* rather than as an ideologist. The objective and slightly ironic gift of this conteur who was, for his epoch, singularly free from romanticism appeals to admirers of Mérimée. In his conversation and as a storyteller the Count was very French. Once, indeed, it had seemed difficult or even impossible to rehabilitate this "Alceste du patriotisme" in his native country. The two great obstacles were his attitude to Latin peoples and Greco-Latin civilization and his compromising entanglement with Germany. There is now, however, every likelihood that he will come fully into his own. While at first he was cautiously introduced in France as the author of the psychological nouvelles *Mlle Irnois* and *Adélaïde*, the *Souvenirs de Voyage* and the *Nouvelles Asiatiques*, there are now defenders of his thought in his own country as well as in Germany.

An interesting thing to observe is that Gobineau appeals to different groups in different countries. Thus, while in Germany he has the support of conservatives it is in France more particularly members of the Left that he interests. Romain Rolland is one of his greatest admirers and M. Herriot has written articles in his praise. The philosophy of Gobineau, in a somewhat modified form, suited exactly the self-confident and expansive mood of the young German Empire after 1870.

On the other hand, at the close of the world-war Gobineau was a revelation to the younger French generation. Many a European thinker has been inclined to account both for the growth and progress of the German empire and for its final defeat in 1918 with the aid of goblinistic conceptions.³⁶ In France a writer of his talent could, once he was known, easily make friends among those who were enemies of nationalism and free from Germanophobia. His rather weak patriotism, his scorn for the régime of Napoleon III³⁷ and his understanding of German and British mentality were, if anything, a recommendation in that group. The very "esprit frondeur" of the internationalists in France would make for his success there.³⁸

Gobineau's theories have been used for purposes of propaganda by different cliques. It suited his German supporters to forget the passages in the *Essai* which did not accord with their assumption of racial superiority. But for the fact that the Count refused steadfastly to modify the pessimistic conclusion of his work on the races, his ideas would have been used largely by sym-

³⁶ See Leon Deffoux, *Les Origines du Gobinisme en Allemagne*, Mercure de France, Paris, 1925.

³⁷ When, at the moment that an opportunity for a diplomatic career offered itself, Gobineau sacrificed his legitimist convictions and rallied to Napoleon III, practical considerations may have played a part, but it is certain that it was his sincere conviction that France needed a strong hand. He accepted Bonaparte in the same spirit that animates today many supporters of Mussolini.

³⁸ Gobineau has found supporters in France among conservatives as well as among liberals. Among the early members of the Gobineau Vereinigung were Paul Bourget, Edouard Schure and somewhat later Albert Sorel. Among his admirers during his life-time should be mentioned Theodore de Banville, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Mérimée. Baron Seillière has published several studies on Gobineau and has shown, especially, a great interest in the relationship between him and Nietzsche. Among eminent anthropologists there are in France Jacques de Bosjolin and Vacher de Lapouge and in Germany Otto Ammon.

pathizers with the viewpoint of our Southern Confederacy during the Civil War. The attempt to make Gobineau out a pan-German is palpably absurd and based on ignorance. No doubt the famous work of Houston Stewart Chamberlain entitled *Die Grundlagen des XIX en Jahrhunderts*³⁹ which appeared in 1899 is partly responsible for this. It served to throw suspicion on the motives of the Gobineau society which had, in fact, remained faithful to its original purpose, quite foreign to pangermanic propaganda, consisting simply in bringing Gobineau before the public by reediting and translating all his works, whether literary or philosophical. In the United States Gobineau has had a great influence, whether directly or indirectly, on the believers in Nordic superiority: one thinks of Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard. Moreover, in America, thinkers, who, if too cautious to give entire credence to his racial thesis, are nevertheless inclined to see truth in the author's conviction that undue heterogeneity is dangerous for any society. Among enemies of democracy and there are many today who distrust majority rule, such an aristocrat as Gobineau is naturally welcome. His admirers of the Left can comfort themselves with the reflection that the Count had prophesied the final triumph of democracy and that he had opposed any efforts to combat this as quite futile.⁴⁰

³⁹ This work by Mr. Chamberlain was exactly suited to the mood of Germany. His thesis resembled that of Gobineau's *Essai* and was undoubtedly inspired by it, but it was from the pan-German point of view a great improvement on the Frenchman's work since it corrected the latter's pessimism in regard to Aryan blood in Germany.

⁴⁰ Gobineau believed that the rise of the "individus capables" should be encouraged and naturally wished the management of affairs to be so far as possible in their hands. He was, however, not optimistic like Renan who looked forward confidently to the rule of an

There is a mentality of a very different order from that of internationalists like Romain Rolland who tend, in different countries, to rally to Gobineau. He seems to fit the post-war mood of disillusionment, that to which Spengler gave expression in *Der Untergang des Westens*. Men of this persuasion are sceptical of liberty, disdain Christian ethics and scoff at the "opium humanitaire". They stand for authority and order and a considerable proportion choose absolutism in State and Church. They have lost the confidence in progress and in the indefinite perfectibility of man which characterized the nineteenth Century. Members of this group recall with amusement or disgust, according to temperament, the Wilsonian slogan. Mr Lothrop Stoddard views "Il Duce" with equanimity or even gratitude. In Germany Joseph Kaufmann represents this realistic viewpoint. In *Gobineau und die Kultur des Abendlandes* he writes "Wie zur Zeit Toqueville's und Gobineau's bestatigt sich der Gegensatz zwischen den Menschen von gestern, den alten Verfechtern der Humanitat, den verstockten Liberalen, die hartnackig an den Fortschritt glauben, und den neuen Menschen die einen heimlichen Groll gegen die Freiheit haben und die eine Menschheit verachten die sie zu sehr enttauscht hat"

Gobineau's racial theory, that "breeding-stud philosophy"⁴¹ which applies the idea of the thorough-bred

⁴¹ The racial thesis of Gobineau is in its pessimism comparable to the principle of Carnot or the law of entropy: it is on the human side the equivalent of that physical law.

aristocracy of the intelligent. Our author was incurably pessimistic. In his opinion the few remaining true aristocrats, whom in *Les Pleiades* he called "fils de roi" would understand one another and tend to congregate. They should do their social duty but should not concern themselves unduly with the masses whom they could, after all, benefit but little.

to humanity, has, at least in a modified or restricted form, found champions among modern thinkers. Many who reject it in its details find the thesis, nevertheless, rich in suggestions. It is certainly in favor, or at least some of its underlying ideas are in favor, among that group who do not consider the factor of environment to be of exclusive importance.

We conclude our very limited study of the work of this fascinating personality, of this "artiste-moraliste" who, not without justification, described himself as "l'homme le plus libre d'esprit qui soit dans ce monde." We feel that the word vitalism describes better than any other the varied and often contradictory tendencies he represented. Although, obviously, the significance of modern economic developments rather escaped him, Count de Gobineau was essentially a precursor, exhibiting seventy years ago a mentality in many ways characteristic of the early twentieth Century. Perhaps, after all, his greatness consists in that he understood the modern soul and that he sought a worthy ideal for modern man.

APPENDIX

GOBINEAU AS A LITERARY CRITIC AND THEORIST

In treating of the importance of Gobineau as a literary critic, Gustave Charlier in his article *Gobineau et le Romantisme*¹ does not hesitate to compare him to Sainte-Beuve whom, it is affirmed, he would have rivaled had he not abandoned the field so early in life. Gobineau's critical essays² are certainly of the utmost importance to anyone who wishes to appreciate his literary productions. A very liberal spirit animates these pages and the outlook on the future is optimistic. The author appears here as a great admirer of French letters, who, notwithstanding his pride in the beauties of the past, can not help being deeply concerned with the greatness to come. Comparing the whole of French literature to a beautiful palace it should, in his opinion, be the honor of his generation to add a wing worthy to take its place among the others.

The rather summary aesthetic theory of the young journalist's found in the essay entitled *Des buts techniques de la littérature*, to which we can here do little more than allude,³ gave him an original position among his contemporaries who were divided by the great con-

¹ See Gustave Charlier *Gobineau et le romantisme*, (*Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles* 29e année, no3 Février, Mars, Avril, 1924), and footnote 2.

² *Des buts techniques de la littérature*, *Nouvelle Revue*, tome 4, pages 94-126 (1845). *Une nouvelle littérature est-elle possible*, *Nouvelle Revue*, tome 3, pp 101-139 (1845). See also Le Comte de Gobineau, *Études Critiques* (1844-1848), containing studies of H. de Balzac, Alfred de Musset, Théophile Gautier, Henri Heine, Jules Janin and Sainte-Beuve. Simon Kra, Paris, September, 1927.

³ See the article (mentioned in the footnote above) by Gustave Charlier for a fuller treatment.

flict between classics and romantics Gobineau was an avowed idealist and that this was due to Kantian influence we know from a letter he wrote to his sister Caroline on July 11th, 1840. Art, he says in this essay, results from the choice made by the artist among the diverse elements furnished him by reality "Nulle beauté possible si l'on se borne à la simple imitation ou à la pure copie." What is essential must be distinguished from what is accessory, one must know how to subordinate the latter in such a way as to bring the former into relief It is the poet's function to idealize his age, but in order to do that he must be positive and really understand it "Destiné à idéaliser son temps c'est bien le moins qu'il le comprenne Pour un poète, être positif, c'est savoir se juger, ainsi que le milieu dans lequel il vit." As for the "travail naïf" of the romantics it is in Gobineau's estimation "one of the maddest ideas ever conceived by the human mind" ⁴ A writer should know what he is doing and why and how he is doing it

But the real thesis of this essay has to do with the five so-called "technical aims" of literary expression which are beauty, grace, energy, gaiety and austerity These five elements are found to be combined in different proportions in different epochs. It would be useless to try to set up an absolute standard, the works of the immortals of different ages are equally great, each having the kind of beauty characteristic of their time, "elles possèdent chacune la beauté voulue par leur siècle" If the *Iliad* seems tedious to many of us that is because

⁴ Gobineau's work represents in great measure a reaction against the "lyrisme personnel" brought into vogue by the romantic writers of the first decades of the 19th Century and this should be kept in mind by those who would class our author as a romantic because he glorified energy

it was not written for such a bustling multitude as we represent. On the other hand the Greeks would have been unable to understand the greatness of Goethe's *Faust*, "this greatness which arises majestically from the depths of the human soul where the real scene is laid" ⁵ As for these "technical aims" there must be a hierarchy based upon their relative fecundity Beauty and grace occupy the first rank for energy, austerity and gaiety seem sterile in comparison. "On préfère la démarche grave de la beauté et le marcher doux de la grâce aux tressautements de la gaieté, aux pas précipités de l'énergie et à l'allure lente et morne de l'austérité" If Voltaire failed in his pretentious *La Pucelle* it was because he had overestimated the possibilities of flight "on the wings of gaiety". That austerity can not suffice to hold the reader's interest is shown by Klopstock's *Messias*. Energy and gaiety are mutually exclusive, at most could grace accompany gaiety and energy go with austerity But this would have to be an energetic austerity such as the stern renunciation of Saint Ignacius or of the Fathers in the desert Beauty results from bringing into play the great things which exist in nature or in the human soul There is no beauty without grandeur The differentiation between beauty and energy is not always quite clear since beauty for Gobineau is to such an extent moral greatness "Pas de beauté sans grandeur: elle ne surgit qu'à la faveur d'une grande passion ou d'un grand intérêt actuel" Thus French tragedy of the 17th Century, a time when social rank was everything, admitted only kings and princes to the stage, this would be absurd in the 19th Century which deems both Faust and Abélard the equals of the duc de Vendôme

⁵ See Chapter IV of the present work, page 10 "The complexity of modern psychology is a favorite topic with Gobineau," etc.

ADELAIDE

The psychological novelet *Adélaïde*⁶ is of all Gobineau's stories, the one which most clearly shows the influence of Stendhal. Here there can be no doubt that his principal "technical aim" was energy which, theories to the contrary, is combined with gaiety. *Adélaïde*, though belonging to the same genre as *Mlle Irnois*, is a work of a very different character. We have here an example of realism bordering on naturalism. While the author exhibited much realistic skill in the other study, his unbeautiful characters there were offset by the very poetic conception of his heroine "Emmelina". There is nothing of the sort in "*Adélaïde*". Besides this is far more a story of action; states of consciousness are not analyzed in detail.

It is interesting to know the origin of this nouvelle. On December 15th of the year 1869 Gobineau at an evening-gathering of friends related an anecdote that was supposed to have occurred at a small German Court. This story was received with so much enthusiasm that the Count was prevailed upon to write it down. He did so but while remitting the manuscript enjoined the strictest silence upon everyone concerned as some of the personages were supposed to be still living.

"*Adélaïde*" is the only one of Count Gobineau's

⁶ *Adélaïde* appeared for the first time in 1913 in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* with a brief study *Sur le Comte de Gobineau* by André de Hevesy. This "nouvelle" which was written shortly before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War illustrates some of the ideas of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, it also shows the influence of Henri Beyle (Stendhal) with whose writings we know Gobineau to have been familiar. See the article on Stendhal in *Le Commerce*, No. 14. Le 14 janvier, 1845.

stories that was completed in a single day His own opinion of it is worthy of note; in his account of it to his wife he writes "Je crois qu'elle te plaira J'en suis plus sûr que l'Akrivie Phrangopoulo. Il y a de la passion et du racontage et pas l'ombre de sentiment où je suis toujours moins sûr de mon fait "

There are probably few who would rank the work as high as "Akrivie" "Adélaïde" in its concentration and the absence of digressions approaches the "conte" far more than does "Mlle. Irnois". It is a character-sketch with a strong dramatic plot There are three principal characters placed in an intensely dramatic situation The author appears to be occupied in making a microscopic study of these three personalities and of their emotional reactions to each other The interest is purely psychological and with a perfect disregard of practically all accessories, is centered on the problem of the outcome of this struggle of wills The situation produces not one but several crises and there is no definite climax For this reason "Adélaïde" is well designated a nouvelle Though far less charming than the story whose heroine is "Emmelina", this novelet can not but be of great interest aside from its intrinsic merits in that the author here clearly discloses his personality All stories are of necessity told from some point of view. To that extent "Mlle Irnois" could furnish us some hints as to its author's temperament For instance, the description throughout of the bourgeois, the whole tone of the narrative in fact indicates the aristocrat. But nothing there is so definitely revealing as what we find in "Adélaïde". In the other nouvelle certain passages are quite characteristic of Gobineau's aristocratic disdain of the bourgeois but we have here in addition something more posi-

tive. The author's cultus of energy, his admiration of strength (we have said that he foreshadowed Nietzsche's "superman") are as clearly brought out as is his scorn of the weakling, the racially inferior. The two principal feminine characters, Adelaide the heroine and Elisabeth her mother, who are rivals and at sword's points over the love of a man, Frederic, are called "Deux Olympiennes" and are represented as unquestionably admirable. Adelaide rather recalls Mathilde de la Mole in Stendhal's "Le Rouge et le Noir". In opposition to these Frederic plays but a sorry rôle and is the object of the author's scorn. We are reminded a little of "Charles Cabert", the protagonist of "La Chasse au Caribou". - -

But let us come to the story. The scene, similarly to the author's psychological novel "Les Pléiades", is laid in a small German town that is the site of a Court. With as complete as possible a neglect of accessories the local color is rather suprisingly produced merely by personalities and gossip. Description of the localities is practically wanting. The setting is "la société" and is remarkably real.

The story opens with the euphemistic statement that Frédéric Rothbanner at the time of leaving the military academy to enter the light cavalry was "distinguished" by the Countess Elisabeth d'Hermansburg. Society was not prepared for such an event and there were serious remonstrances. Among those who raged there were especially one Bernstein who had committed untold follies for the Countess and another admirer of years' standing, "le gros Maelstrom". The Grand Duke himself was sufficiently aroused to send her a sharp epigram. Elisabeth, however, was found to be perfectly capable

of defending herself and after a period of six months people had become accustomed to the state of affairs

Elisabeth was 35 years of age and at the height of her beauty. She had, moreover, a reputation for wit that was increasing day by day. Her lover, Frédéric, was but 22 years of age and had little more than his attractive appearance to recommend him. To explain the Countess' actions one had to take into account her habit of deep thinking. "Il avait fallu cette profondeur de réflexion et cette sagacité d'égoïsme, dons précieux de la comtesse, la plus accomplie des créatures en toutes choses." Being reflective Elisabeth even at the height of her glory could not but perceive her nearness to the time when she would be slowly but surely moving on a downward slope. "Elle avait monté dans les fleurs, il allait falloir bientôt revenir dans les ronces. Pour savoir ce qu'une femme adorée devient d'ordinaire, elle n'avait eu besoin que de jeter les yeux autour d'elle, et les jardins d'Armide où elle régnait lui avaient montré en foule leurs gazons verdoyants peuplés de vieilles cigales dont les voix prophétiques n'étaient comprises de personne hormis d'elle-même."

An examination of one after another of these sad "métamorphosées" convinced her that the cause of their adversity lay in the thoughtlessness with which each had linked her happiness to a man by whom she was dominated and who could flee her as soon as he wearied of her. Elisabeth was determined not to share their fate. She would take a young and perfectly inexperienced man and while making him happy, completely enslave him. She would know him thoroughly, understand his every trait. Her intention was to possess him to a point

where he could never revolt. Thus she would realize one of those marvels encountered but in fiction, she would create one of those hypothetical loves that last forever. Until her last breath she would be served and loved "Du moins le monde, et c'est l'essentiel, me croira telle (aimée)." This last sentence is curious and of significance. It has been said that the setting of the story is "la société", the society of this small German Court. Indeed the factor represented by "le monde" and its opinions is throughout a weighty one.

The Countess seemed to have carried out her plan with admirable success. Five years passed and no one in all this time had observed in the lover the slightest sign of ennui. Madame d'Hermansburg was then 40 years of age. At this juncture occurs what is technically known as the "exciting moment". It is the death of Count d'Hermansburg, Elisabeth's husband. Leading as it did to the revelation of certain mysteries it was the signal for the catastrophe.

After a year of mourning Elisabeth urged Rothbanner to marry her and thus put an end to the irregularity of their position. It was a surprising suggestion to come from the Countess, who, as much by her composure and her audacity as by her station in life, had never failed to command people's respect. Frédéric did not favor the idea and gave a number of reasons for opposing it. Of these Elisabeth took only one seriously, the argument that he was a Catholic and could not marry one of Protestant faith. She informed the delighted Bishop of B. of her desire to be converted to the Catholic religion and on the third Sunday after Easter publicly made her abjuration in the Cathedral. On the following

day she again approached Rothbanner on the subject of matrimony. The latter reiterated his reasons, none of which could convince her. Their conversation that had begun in the usual affectionate tone changed to a drier one. Finally Elisabeth, who realized that victory would not come without a struggle, came to the point and insisted on knowing the true reason. As he was still playing the innocent she finally charged him with it "J'entends votre liaison avec ma fille". The situation had altered; it was no longer a question of lovers. Elisabeth is described as being pale with the pallor of the warrior caused solely by the passion to conquer. Frederic is in the perturbed condition of an animal hopelessly caught in a trap.

The Countess while admitting that she was not in a position to judge Frédéric, yet insisted that he make reparations. He was first to regularize their position by marriage. Adelaide would be temporarily removed and then a husband found for her.

At this point the conversation is interrupted by the sudden entry of the Countess' daughter. Adélaïde is 18 years of age. She is described as "blonde extrêmement, blanche à éblouir; une taille de reine, des bras admirables, rien d'une jeune fille, beaucoup d'une impératrice au grand. . ." We are here in presence of an Aryan! Physically and mentally Adélaïde is a good example of the author's conception of the Aryan. Gobineau, the apostle of "la vie intense" admires and holds up to the reader's admiration strong and ceaselessly energetic characters, fighters. These two women in instance Mis-directed they assuredly are, a bad environment here has done its worst! Adélaïde is really a monster. Yet both

she and her mother are admirable. As a daughter Adélaïde is atrocious. "Quant à une notion quelconque des rapports de fille à mère, pas l'ombre." She is proud and happy in the knowledge that she is young and beautiful and exults in this advantage over her mother, whose charm is fading. As far as the respective characters of the two women are concerned the difference is not well marked though they behave somewhat differently in adaptation to their different positions. Gobineau in one passage describes Adélaïde as lacking her mother's wit and her audacity and implacable haughtiness. This, however, is scarcely convincing as on the occasion of her first recorded speech to Frédéric she turns to him "d'un air hautain" and then manifests considerable wit and audacity throughout. The author seems really to have failed to differentiate these two characters sufficiently to give them distinct individualities. Beside these "Olympiennes" how wretched a rôle is reserved for the poor gentle Rothbanner, who is always polite and of an unfailingly elegant correctness! "Je me l' imagine assez, accoudé sur le marbre de la cheminée dans son attitude toujours élégante et correcte, mais ne trouvant pas le plus petit mot à dire"

The young man is undeniably in a position not to be envied. Adélaïde has come to inquire whether or not he has declared his intentions and insists that an end be put to her uncertainty. Madame d'Hermansburg, who has long been aware of what has happened, maintains that M. de Rothbanner is hers and will be her husband. Adélaïde turns to the latter and demands an answer. He is ill at ease and can think of nothing better than an attempt at a propitiating phrase. But things have come

to a pass where a decision is imperative Both women are in dead earnest. Frédéric, who loves Adélaïde, is in the following dilemma The young girl is willing to suffer dishonour and to go to the convent with which her mother threatens her; she will even endure being abandoned by him if only he wont suffer the Countess to triumph But in obeying Adélaïde he must needs lose out entirely as far as love is concerned He can not have the girl Incensing Elisabeth will entail disgrace and he will in addition to being ostracised from society, be expelled from the army. It will oblige him to emigrate and he is completely without funds

The description of his discomfiture is amusing. "Naturellement, ne sachant au monde quel parti prendre, il prit celui de perdre contenance et son nez rougit légèrement, ses yeux devinrent humides et il tira son mouchoir de sa poche pour se moucher" These symptoms produced very contrary effects on the two beholders. Adélaïde with a disdainful smile left the room, the Countess approached Frédéric and seized his hands

There follows the highly entertaining account of how Elisabeth d'Hermansburg taking her victory for granted, assured the youth of her entire forgiveness She spoke to him with a maternal tenderness Frédéric thought of contesting her assumption but to no avail "Il perdit du temps a réfléchir à la meilleure manière d'essayer son opposition, et il se trouva au bout d'un quart d'heure si bien enguirlandé, paqueté, emballé, cloué dans sa caisse, que . . . ce n'est pas qu'il n'eût par moments des spasmes et des soubresauts, mais rien de plus inutile! Cet ange d'Elisabeth comprenait tout, excusait tout. . ."

Elisabeth d'Hermansburg became Mme. Rothbanner

and Adélaïde profited by the occasion to pay one of her Aunts a three months' visit, very natural in a girl who was known to have worshipped her father

The next pages describe the manoeuvres made by Adélaïde in her desire to return home and the mother's endeavors to justify her refusal to allow it. Both women are exceedingly clever at dissembling their feelings toward each other from the outside world. There are recorded conversations of both ladies with their respective friends, and what is said by them touching their mutual relations is calculated to make a most edifying impression. Adélaïde told everyone that she loved her mother far too much to go away and be married. That she was in earnest in this seemed proven by the way she turned down even the most advantageous proposals. In the meantime Mme Rothbanner made a discovery that decided her on a new course of action. Her husband and Adélaïde appeared to be writing each other notes and she saw cause for alarm in the latter's frequent and prolonged absences. Elisabeth sent for her daughter. There is now inserted a more detailed description of the young lady and her character. She was both intelligent and beautiful, but had had unfortunate influences from the first. Her mother had neglected and even ignored her and her father ("son imbécile de père"), for whom she in sober fact had the profoundest contempt, had outrageously spoiled her. Miss Dickson, the English governess had been her one guide and we shall see what sort of a person she was. The description of this lady seems very worthy of quotation. "Adélaïde avait eu pour unique guide dans la vie sa gouvernante anglaise Miss Dickson, très sentimentale, très adonnée à la phil-

osophie nuageuse, aimant le sherry, ne détestant pas le grog et se saturant en secret de romans français capable de faire rougir des gendarmes, et qu'elle avait soin de passer à sa pupille "

Thanks to her governess Adélaïde had ever since she was 14 well understood M de Rothbanner's position in the household Now her distinguishing trait was combativeness Love of battle in the course of time became such a passion with her that it dominated every other kind of love "Douée, comme je l'ai dit, de la fureur des combats, fureur en soi admirable et qui n'est pas l'indice d'une âme vulgaire " Such being her nature it is clear that "Adélaïde" belongs to Gobineau's élite While we are not expected to admire all that she does in expression of her heroic self it is manifest that we must blame only her environment She was the victim of an impossible bringing-up

At 16 Adélaïde imagined that the most beautiful thing in the world would be to throw herself across her mother's path and to deflect for her exclusive benefit this love that appeared to be a thing of so much value. It was in itself regrettable to think that she had attained the age of 16 without anyone's having paid her any attention! Her mother was the most powerful being in her world "Comme sa mère était en définitive l'être le plus puissant dont elle eût la notion, elle ne conçut rien de si chevaleresque, de si vaillant, de si hardi, de si digne d'admiration que d'affronter sa mère et, si elle pouvait, de la battre et de la dépouiller " Thus Frédéric Rothbanner suddenly found himself the object of this astounding little monster's attentions Adélaïde, who is described as the prettiest, wittiest and most enchanting

of the girls of the "Résidence" not only declared her love for him but dismayed him with threats of suicide. Soon her design was accomplished. Frédéric in great consternation had made it a point to shun the enchantress but such a course was in the long run difficult. As for doing his plain duty and informing the Countess it was inconceivable. Not he with his gentle nature so alien to anything that approached harshness! To do him justice it must be admitted that he felt remorse and this particularly when he thought of all Elisabeth had done for him. Unfortunately his remorse appeared only to augment the love that Adélaïde had inspired in him. As for the latter she had violently fallen in love herself.

There is a curious passage descriptive of Rothbanner that should be quoted as it is so characteristic of Gobineau. "Il me fait exactement l'effet d'un chapeau de Paris c'est ravissant, bien chiffonné, d'un air exquis, ça coute très cher, et quand on analyse le fait, ça ne vaut pas quatre sous de bon argent. Les gens comme Rothbanner sont comme les vélocipèdes ils ne roulent que sur les trottoirs. Hors des trottoirs ça tombe. Moi j'aime mieux les gens qui sont gênés sur les trottoirs, mais qui peuvent très bien marcher dans les bois." This character is of course, like certain other unestimable figures of the author's creation, of very mixed blood, just the reverse of his Aryan ideal. We must not lose sight of the importance of these racial preoccupations. *Adélaïde* furnishes us a good example; they are far less apparent in *Mlle. Irnois*.

But let us take up the thread of the story. The Countess has deemed it wise to permit her daughter to

come home. Adélaïde now gives the most striking proof of her audacity. Immediately after a very affectionate greeting, that has not failed to deeply affect the household, she follows her mother to her room and assures her that she being the stronger has no intention of yielding Frédéric to her. Elisabeth takes this very coolly and pretends to have expected as much and to be willing. She rings and sends for Frédéric leaving him and Adélaïde alone together. In this interview Rothbarrer very correct and dignified returns all the letters he had received from the young lady since her departure and, giving cogent reasons, makes clear to her the necessity of discontinuing a relationship from all points of view unjustifiable. Adélaïde was for the time being defeated.

Her next step was to utilize to the utmost Rothbarrer's susceptibility to jealousy. Both she and her mother understood him and his nature perfectly and used all their mental powers in an effort to find the most efficacious way of handling him. Beyond a doubt his jealousy was the best tool. "Il est curieux que les passions de ce dernier ordre là, ont d'autant plus d'énergie et de cruauté que ceux qui les éprouvent sont plus faibles."

Adelaide commenced to flirt outrageously. Especially to one Christian Grunewald she gave so much encouragement that their approaching union was a current topic. Elisabeth did not seem to discourage the idea of this match. Things were going remarkably well and people were commenting on the Countess' ruddy appearance and on how happy she looked. She was an encouragement to other matrons to marry youths. About this time occurred the war-minister's annual ball.

Frédéric was present but was pale and appeared to be strangely downcast. Adélaïde was with Christian. Here is a piece of excellent description: "Vers une heure du matin, Adélaïde, belle à tourner la tête à l'univers, d'une gaieté étourdissante, ayant semé à droite et à gauche mille mots charmants qu'on répétait, n'avait pas quitté une minute le bras de Christian fou, ivre, délirant de bonheur (le bonheur lui sortait de tous les pores, au brave garçon, et le camélia qu'il avait à la boutonnière semblait le respirer)." At the psychological moment she approached Rothbanner and asked him whether or not she was to dismiss Christian Grunewald. Jealousy had done its work. Taking into consideration the young man's soft and pliant nature the tremendous significance and passion of this "yes" can hardly be overestimated. The result was that poor Christian was cruelly dismissed and Adélaïde and Frédéric left the ballroom together. She had won.

The following days were days of ecstatic happiness for these two. "Le lendemain s'ouvrit, pour les deux coupables, un paradis d'enchantement. Toutes leurs passions satisfaites à la fois! Victoire, vengeance, amour, bien joué, tout cela formait la part d'Adélaïde, celle de Frédéric se composait d'une jalousie détruite, d'une atroce souffrance abolie, d'une passion arrivée par la résistance au dernier degré d'insanité et qui n'avait plus rien à souhaiter! Nous ne pouvons guère nous représenter, nous autres gens paisibles, ce que peuvent être, ce que doivent être, ce que sont nécessairement les transports de fous pareils. Pour peu que les lois physiques s'appliquent à l'amour comme au reste des choses de ce monde, il est clair que la force d'expansion est en raison

des obstacles qu'elle fait sauter et que la fille la plus aimante du roman bénin d'Auguste Lafontaine, le jour où elle épouse par devant notaire le plus candide, le plus adoré des commis de chancellerie, ne saurait l'aimer comme une Adélaïde!"

As for Elisabeth it can be imagined of what appalling vehemence was her hatred! People were malicious enough to congratulate her on how nicely her dear daughter seemed to be getting on with her stepfather "On félicita l'heureuse Madame Rothbanner, qui, fière comme le cacique indien attaché par l'ennemi au poteau de torture, accueillait ces compliments avec le plus doux sourire" This situation was not destined to last Frédéric at the end of a month came to a realization of the unworthiness of his conduct He found on returning to Elisabeth that she was an angelic victim She thanked him with tears!

It would take too long to relate the successive events of the story in detail The situation continues with success falling now to the lot of one and now to the lot of the other of the strong-minded combatants Adélaïde knows her best weapon, Frédéric is ever susceptible to the pangs of jealousy Elisabeth on the other hand continues unfailingly sweet and gentle, thereby retaining a hold on his powers of compassion and on his sense of duty Adélaïde continues loving Rothbanner for some time after he has completely lost her respect His oaths and protestations are valueless to her She tells him clearly how little she trusts him and that her scorn of him is as great as her love

It has been stated that the dramatic situation in this story leads to more than one crisis without ever reaching

a definite climax There is simply a succession of contrasting scenes I quote the following passage particularly on account of what is said of the bourgeois "Cette scène-la, ce raccomodement fut suivie de dix scènes en sens contraire qui en amenèrent six autres contrastantes La maison était un enfer, bien que les apparences furent gardées toujours On se douta bien au dehors de quelque chose et je n'aurais pas conseillé à des bourgeois de mener cette petite vie; . . . "

Time alone is able to bring about a gradual modification Rothbanner growing older, naturally does not continue to play the same rôle nor can he be indefinitely subject to the same emotions "Quand ce diable de Rothbanner eut attrapé quarante ans et un ventre assez respectable, et que surtout il eut inventé sa fameuse culasse à mortier, sa jalousie à l'endroit d'Adélaïde fut devenue fort traitable Quant à l'amour ce sentiment avait disparu pour lui comme pour elle " It can be said that Elisabeth had won out "En somme Madame Rothbanner était victorieuse sur toute la ligne; elle possédait sans nul partage un époux qui, désormais, ne valait ni plus ni moins qu'un autre " A remarkable consequence of the struggle was that these two women came secretly to have a great esteem for each other They were in a sense united by their common contempt for Rothbanner . . . "À force de lutter ensemble et de se trouver également inépuisables en ressources, en haine, en courage, elles prirent l'une pour l'autre cette estime secrète que l'énergie inspire aux gens énergiques" . . .

Frédéric had become sort of a specter, he hardly dared appear at the table and arranged to spend only a minimum of his time in their company. Adélaïde had

thoroughly tired of her former idol. She married a chamberlain but left him after one year to return to her mother. It seems that no two lovers were ever so powerfully and inseparably attached as were these two women, who from a habit of years' standing continued to exhaust all their wit and ingenuity in biting invective against each other.

In concluding I would say that, though in many ways quite characteristic of Gobineau, this *nouvelle* in its proximity to naturalism stands almost isolated in his work. "Adélaïde" gives evidence especially of his psychological gift, although the undoubted fact that the two principal feminine characters here are insufficiently differentiated, obliges us to admit the justification to that extent of the accusation that Gobineau's characters are mere "fantoques". These two "Olympiennes", as they stand before us, are undeniably creatures of his world of ideas. Very probably this departure from Gobineau's customary realism can be explained by the fact that the work was conceived and written down in a single day.

The style of this *nouvelle* is distinguished chiefly by humor and irony. The author's method of characterization is the artistic one employed in *Mlle Irnois* of bringing in bits of description here and there. The motivation is good. By my quotations I have tried to show the author's skill in painting word-pictures with very few strokes. It seems remarkable by how few means the author has succeeded in creating most realistically the atmosphere of the society of this small German Court. Undeniably he had the gift of narration. *Adélaïde* is not a pretty story, but how delightfully well it is told!

THE RÔLE OF CYRUS

We print the passage on the rôle of Cyrus in the *Histoire des Perses*⁷ because it is essential for an understanding of Count de Gobineau's interpretation of History. According to Gobineau, Cyrus was a more important figure ("un plus grand agent de l'histoire") than Caesar, Augustus, Charlemagne or even Alexander. The History of the World and, in particular, of modern Europe, would have been totally different had Cyrus never lived. It was he who, in the fourth Century B. C., saved his country, Persia, by repulsing the Scythians and pushing them toward the West, so that they were finally forced to choose a different route for their migrations. Thus the course of History was changed. "Admettons un instant que ce grand travail de défense n'eût pas réussi et que les populations ariennes, ouvrant définitivement les brèches qu'elles pratiquaient depuis des siècles, eussent couvert le monde méridional, l'Europe n'aurait pas eu de populations germaniques. Les Ases, immobilisés dans leurs établissements du bas Volga, se fussent graduellement absorbés au sein des masses slaves, et n'auraient pas, remontant vers le pôle, créé dans la Suède, dans la Norvège, dans le Jutland, cette agglomération de peuples qui, au cinquième siècle, valut à ces parages redoutés la dénomination de matrice des nations. Il n'y aurait pas eu de Germains, disais-je tout à l'heure, ni partant de monde romain de la seconde période, ni surtout notre société barbare, ni par consé-

⁷ This same passage has been reproduced by Robert Dreyfus in his *Vies et Prophéties du Comte de Gobineau*, pages 218-219 and by Maurice Lange in his *Le Comte de Gobineau, Etude Biographique et Critique*, pages 152-153.

quent le moyen âge, ni rien des principes constitutifs de la civilisation moderne. L'Europe actuelle n'eût jamais existé. A sa place on n'eût vu qu'une continuation prolongée jusqu'à nos jours de la putridité impériale.

En revanche, ce sang généreux, vigoureux, régénérateur, dont nos veines n'auraient pas une seule goutte, aurait afflué dans les régions méridionales. Les Germains, porteurs peut-être d'un autre nom, les Saxons, les Franks, les Goths, les Normands, se seraient trouvés sur les rives du Nil, sur les bords de la mer des Indes, dans des cités construites au fond du golfe d'Oman, non moins que sur les plaines centrales de la Perse, de la Mésopotamie et du Taurus. L'Histoire complète eût été changée, et nous ne pouvons guère nous rendre un compte quelque peu exact des immenses différences que l'humanité pensante aurait eu à subir. Cependant nous parvenons à comprendre que le centre du monde fût resté aux environs de la Mésopotamie, et que Londres et Paris ne se seraient jamais mirées, telles qu'elles sont aujourd'hui, dans les eaux de la Tamise et de la Seine. Ainsi ce que nous sommes nous-mêmes, Français, Anglais, Allemands, Européens du dix-neuvième siècle, c'est à Cyrus que nous le devons. Je voudrais que le lecteur prît la peine d'examiner ce fait sous toutes ses faces, de le creuser du mieux qu'il lui sera possible, d'en peser toute l'importance, toute la gravité. Il n'y a rien d'un intérêt aussi intense dans toutes les annales humaines."⁸

⁸ *Histoire des Perses* (by J. A. de Gobineau) III, 6. *Traditions sur la mort de Cyrus*. See also, in this connection, VI, 5. *Fin de l'histoire des Iraniens*.

FROM *LE PARADIS DE BÉOWULF.*
ERROR AND TRUTH.

Ces deux sœurs, également belles,
Volaient, se tenant par la main.
L'ombre mouvante de leurs ailes
Ombrageait le large chemin
Elles se murmuraient entre elles
Parfois, un propos tout soudain
D'où naissait un double sourire,
Ou quelque douce gravité,
L'une était, puisqu'il faut le dire,
L'Erreur, brillante de santé,
Et l'autre était la Vérité

Je ne fais point d'allégorie;
C'étaient deux filles pour de bon !

L'Erreur à la bouche fleurie,
Aux yeux noirs comme le charbon,
Montrait sur son charmant visage,
Dans les rondeurs de son corsage
Une ferme nubilité,
Elle montait avec courage,
Cherchant à rendre le passage
Facile pour la Vérité.

Celle-ci, beaucoup plus petite,
Plus frêle et plus faible surtout,
Timide, hésitante, interdite,
Sur l'Erreur s'appuyait beaucoup.
Il paraissait à son sourire
Qu'elle l'avait très fort en gré
Je ne me tins pas de leur dire :

Il faut voyager pour s'instruire !
Je ne m'étais pas préparé
A vous rencontrer de la sorte
Guidant l'éternelle cohorte
A travers l'espace azuré !
Vous voilà, les mains bien unies ?
Je vous supposais ennemies
Et le contraire m'est montré !

L'Erreur, alors levant la tête
Et me mesurant du regard,
Répondit. — Crois-tu, par hasard,
Avoir la science complète ?
Si tu le crois, tu t'es flatté !
Que ton ignorance se rompe !
Et, toi, parles-lui, Vérité !
Il jurerait que je le trompe !

La Vérité leva ses yeux
Purs, innocents et radieux
Sur les miens qui s'en réjouirent,
Et, d'un accent harmonieux,
Voilà ce que ses lèvres dirent.
Je suis faible et si j'ai vécu
En grelottant sur votre terre
Tu dois demeurer convaincu,

Puisque je n'en fais pas mystère,
Que c'est à ma sœur que je dois
Mon existence et quelques droits
Dont il fallut me satisfaire.
J'étais un triste nourrisson !
Dans sa robe elle m'a portée ;
Sur son cœur elle m'a flattée,

De sa voix elle m'a gâtée
En me berçant de sa chanson,
Et si j'ai pu devenir belle,
Et si j'ai vu pousser mon aile,
Et si tu me vois auprès d'elle
Aussi joyeuse en ce moment
C'est qu'elle n'est point ma rivale,
Mais d'une humeur toujours loyale,
Elle a voulu sans intervalle
Mon règne et mon couronnement !

Elle a trouvé la race humaine
Se débattant dans son borbier,
Lui montrer son devoir entier
C'eût été périr à la peine
Elle prit un morceau de bois,
Elle prit un quartier de pierre,
— Va-t-en leur faire ta prière,
Dit-elle au sauvage finnois
Au nègre, au malais, au peau-rouge !
— Ainsi trouva-t-elle un moyen
De m'amasser un peu de bien
Dans le plus misérable bouge !

Vois-tu cet homme qui, là bas,
S'envole en agitant les bras,
L'œil éclatant d'enthousiasme ?
Il fut le père des soldats
Et son front contracté d'un spasme
Porte la fureur des combats.
C'est Odin. N'a-t-il pas au monde
Communiqué de saintes transports ?
N'a-t-il pas promené sur l'onde,

Par toute la machine ronde
Cette énergique tribu blonde
Qui ne compta pas ses efforts ?
N'a-t-il pas à ses créatures,
A ses hardis envahisseurs,
Enseigné l'amour des blessures,
La convoitise des douleurs ?
Par son ivresse téméraire
N'a-t-il pas transformé la terre
En frayant la route au mystère
Des évangéliques douceurs ?

C'est en tremblant que je te montre
Cet autre qu'on a tant maudit !
Pourtant, je vais à sa rencontre,
Ma bouche, tu vois, lui sourit
Lorsque, du haut de sa chamelle,
Contemplant le ciel étoilé,
Dans une prose solennelle,
Du Dieu Très Haut il a parlé,
Ma sœur, à l'entour de sa selle
Menait les tribus du désert
Il pulvérisa tout rebelle
Depuis Tours jusqu'à Compostelle,

De Fez à la Rome nouvelle,
De l'Ukraine au lointain Niger,
De l'Oural aux Montagnes bleues
Et sur des mille et mille lieues
Il fit régner le turban vert !
Il vous rendit la confiance
La sève, le feu, l'espérance
Qu'avait rongés l'antiquité

Il érigea murs et cité
Et, sans lui, la magnificence
Arabe n'eût pas existé !
Il fit reflleurir la science
Qui couronna l'Humanité
Dans les écoles de Cordoue,
Et s'il se trompa, je t'avoue
Que j'en ai beaucoup profité !

Mais il serait tant d'autres preuves
Et qui te paraîtraient plus neuves
Que ces deux prises au hasard !
Roger Bacon et Raymond Lulle,
S'ils n'avaient pas, dans leurs cellules,
Hébergé tant d'illusions,
N'auraient jamais d'un pied si ferme
Conduit leurs successeurs au terme
Où je sortis des visions !
Et si, par ma sœur animée,
La méprise de Ptolemée
N'avait fait mouvoir le soleil,
Et si tant et tant d'autres sages
N'avaient choisi tant de mirages
Pour sujets de leur appareil,
Leur trouble et débile lunette,
Peut-être plus juste et plus nette
Mais ne traversant rien du tout,
Des choses n'eût vu que l'écorce
Et n'ayant ni vertu ni force
N'aurait pas découvert beaucoup.

— Quoi ! M'écriari-je avec furie,
Quoi, Vérité, pourras-tu bien
Suivre cette plaisanterie

Insolente et qui, sur ma vie !
Certe, en ta bouche ne vaut rien ?
Ta compagne peut être belle ;
Mes yeux le disent, j'en convien ;
Ils tournent, malgré moi, vers elle ;
Mais je la connais ! Mais la peur
Me prend, sachant que c'est l'Erreur !
Mais je la hais ! Mais je t'adore !
Mais je voudrais avoir encore
Un glaive au bout de ce bras-là
Pour frapper le monstre à la face,
Changer son sourire en grimace . .

— Es-tu bien sûr de tout cela ?
Tu prends l'Erreur pour le Mensonge,
Réfléchis ! Pèse ! Songe, songe !
Calcule et prends meilleur avis.
Pas un être un peu magnanime
N'a fait quatre pas sur la cime
Des rêves qu'il a poursuivis,
Sans avoir accepté pour guide
Cette chasseresse intrépide
A qui l'univers fut soumis !

— Eh bien ! Mettons que je me trompe,
Dis-je en serrant très fort son bras,
N'est-il pas temps qu'il s'interrompe
Ce long détour que font tes pas ?
Le monde infime et méprisable
Créé pour rester incapable
De marcher droit dans la clarté
A disparu de ta présence ;
N'es-tu pas notre suffisance,

O Lumineuse Vérité?
Ne vas-tu pas d'une voix forte
Rallier toute la cohorte
De la nouvelle Humanité
Sous ton aile, autour de ta porte,
Dans ta maison, à ton côté?
N'allons-nous pas, tant que nous sommes,
Vieillards, enfants, tous, femmes, hommes
Entrer dans la Divinité?
Allons! Déployant ta croissance,
Dépouille cette indigne enfance,
Revêts l'entière adolescence,
Montre la ferme contenance,
La despotique confiance,
Attributs de ta majesté!

— Je vis naître un calme sourire,
Quand elle m'eut bien écouté

— Crois donc ce que je vais te dire,
Puisque je suis la Vérité
Tu supposes que, dans la sphère
Où nous gravitons désormais
Il ne reste plus à faire
Que de s'épanouir en paix,
Que nous sommes des Dieux tranquilles
Tenant des coupes de nectar,
Riants, mais surtout immobiles
Et que le denier de César,
Je dis la fatigue et la peine,
Avant été payé par nous,
Tous nous allons reprendre haleine
Pendant l'éternité bien pleine
Sans plus rien porter sur nos cous

Et qu'enfin, sachant tout et même
Prononçant d'un pouvoir suprême
Sur chaque chose et sur chacun,
Nous sentirons notre poitrine
Contenir la force divine,
Dieu dans nous tous et nous dans Un.

Non ! Dieu vit seul ! Il nous contemple
Sans nous prendre pour compagnons !
Nous levons les voiles du temple,
Voilà tout ce que nous gagnons.
Nous avons, d'une marche heureuse,
Posé le pied dans l'infini,
Mais l'incertain n'est pas banni
De notre essence aventureuse.
Nous approchons de l'Éternel ;
Mais, saillis d'un degré mortel,
Nous voilà dressés sur un autre ;
Nous voyons plus, nous prenons mieux,
Nous avons grandi dans les cieux,

Mais l'Éternité n'est pas nôtre !
Nous irons toujours en montant,
Nous serons plus purs, mais, pourtant,
Restant semblables à nous-mêmes ;
Nous aurons vers les points extrêmes
Gravité plus près qu'aujourd'hui ;
Mais Dieu restera le couvercle !
Le carré s'approche du cercle
Sans jamais se confondre en lui

— Mais nous sommes des Dieux, repris-je ?

— Des Dieux, sans doute et le prestige
Des Dieux t'entoure, tu le vois.

Nous en avons la libre allure
Et la généreuse nature,
La majestueuse stature
Et la triomphante figure
Et l'énergie au bout des doigts !
Nous sommes, de façon parfaite,
Les pareils des Olympiens
Qui, de la terre alors en fête,
Se distribuaient tous les biens ;
Nous sommes les pareils, encore,
De ces glorieux combattants
Qui, d'une aurore à l'autre aurore
Et ne mesurant pas le temps,
Sur les parvis d'Asgard la Belle
Livraient une joute immortelle,
Tombaient, revivaient haletants,
Et traversant les agonies,
Sans se soucier du repos,
Refusaient même aux Valkyries
Le droit de guérir les héros.

Puisque c'est là votre modèle,
Suivez ma sœur ! C'est avec elle,
Par elle que vous grandirez !
Toujours meilleurs et plus habiles,
Mieux avisés, mieux éclairés,
Mais toujours chercheurs, indociles,
Ce n'est pas moi que vous aurez,
Que par instants, que par degrés !
Lui seul qui vit dans le triangle
Et qui m'a faite et me soutient
Et dont rien ne borne et n'étrangle
L'immensité qui vous contient,
Lui seul . . .

— Je ne laissai pas dire

Un mot de plus à celle-là,
Mais courant, joyeux, au sourire
Qui chez l'Erreur se dévoila,
Des deux mains je saisis sa robe

— Malheur au méchant qui dérobe
Ton grand mérite à nos efforts !
M'écriai-je, et je te révère !
Demeure, comme sur la terre,
Le mobile de mes transports !
Puisqu'Apollon trouva la branche
Du vert laurier, en se trompant,
Et puisque Cérès, blonde et blanche
Cherchant sa fille, allant, rampant,
Et circulant comme un serpent,
Folle d'une douleur suprême,
Apprit, pourtant, à Triptolème,
Par un hasard, l'art d'Éleusis,
Puisque Junon, croyant mal faire,
Suscita l'heureuse colère
D'Hercule et la sainte misère
Fatale à tant de Busiris,
Je suis à toi !

— C'est là, sans doute,

Dit la Vérité, sur ma route
Ce qu'on nomme un pas de géant !
J'embrassai la jeune Déesse
Et comme on embrasse un enfant,
Et plein d'une chaude allégresse,
Ayant salué ma maîtresse,
Je m'éloignai tout triomphant

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